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Ogre/G.E.V.

The giant cybernetic tanks of 2085 are now just 100 years away. The "ante-centennial" of the very *first* minigame is observed in a battery of articles, beginning on page 24.

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John M. Ford, Oc.D.
(Occasional Designer)

RPGSpeak

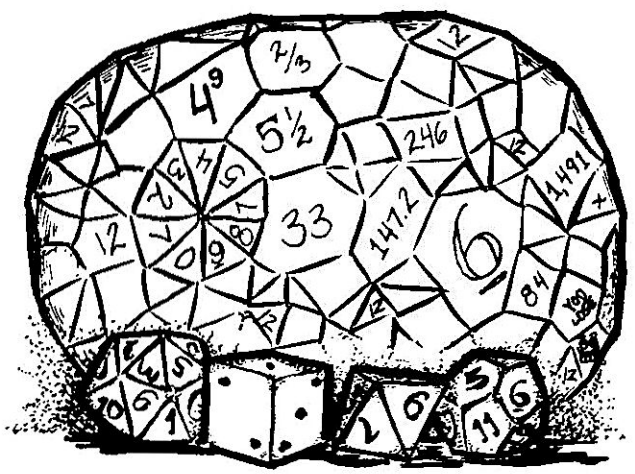
Character: A set of numbers created for the purpose of killing things.

Things: Sets of numbers created to be killed by characters.

Monster: A subset of **Things** that may occasionally kill characters in return, as determined by **Dice** (which see).

Character Creation System: There are two varieties. **In Die-Rolling Systems** the player rolls dice until an acceptably large set of values appears. **Point-Allocation Systems** save time by permitting the player to make up the numbers.

Combat System: A method of dramatically postponing the killing of things.



Dice: Small objects used to generate excuses for poor performance.

Magic System: A method of dramatically increasing the number of things that may be killed in one game-turn.

Attributes: Points scored for successful play of the **Character Creation System** (which see). **Attributes** come in many named varieties, each of which measures the character's ability to kill things. (Exceptions are **Hit Points**, which measure things' ability to kill the character, and **Wisdom**, which measures nothing.)

Experience Points: 1) A mathematical expression of the designer's awe at his latest monster. 2) An award of no intrinsic value, which may be exchanged for the ability to accumulate such awards at an increased rate. See **Wage-Price Spiral**.

Money: See **Experience Points** (defs. 1 and 2).

Alignment: An acceptable form of prejudice in RPG societies, leading to random violence, political overthrow, and occasionally genocide.

Class: An arbitrary set of union rules that influence the players' selection of numbers in the **Character Creation System**. ("The history of roleplaying games is a history of class struggle." — Gandalf Marx, 14th-level philosopher.)

Level: Method of counting **Experience Points** for those who cannot cope with three-digit numbers.

NPC Class: A class (which see), forbidden to players, which is so effective at killing things that all players immediately acquire such characters.

Modifier: Any number which may be ignored.

Table: A graphic device consisting of a numbered list of vaguely related words, intended to save time and enhance play by ensuring that the same three goblins appear every fifteen minutes.

Gamemaster Screen: A graphic device that combines frequently-used reference materials into a form they should have had to begin with. Theoretically intended to stand erect, shielding GM documents from view; in practice, designed to topple over when subjected to such game-table events as rolling dice or breathing.

Player Satisfaction: Calculated by the neo-Lanchester formula:

$$(TK/CK \times NS/CP)^{ND} \times BC$$

where TK = number of things killed by character
CK = number of characters killed by things
CP = cover price of rules and supplements
NS = number of supplements
ND = number of types of dice required for play
BC = beers consumed during session

Basic Set: The first three volumes of a game system, always packaged as an independent unit whether or not they are adequate to begin play.

Advanced Sets: Volumes that must be added to the **Basic Set** to make play possible, unless advertised as an **Entirely New Game** (which see).

Supplements: Method of avoiding **Revision** (which see).

Publisher's Magazine: Method of ensuring that errata, rules modifications, discussion, etc. go out of print in the shortest possible time.

Miniatures: A time-consuming and expensive art form which many roleplayers indulge in, in the same hope of eventual utility that leads others to save pieces of string.

Computer Roleplaying: A technique for enjoying all the tedious mechanical aspects of gaming with none of the human response or interaction.

Revision: See **Entirely New Game**.

Entirely New Game: Revision.

Liar: Favorite hangout of game designers.

*John M. Ford is the author of **Web of Angels, The Dragon Waiting, Princes of the Air,** and **The Final Reflection**; his latest game projects are a **Star Trek** game (with Greg Costikyan) and a **Paranoia** adventure, both coming soon from West End Games. In other incarnations he wrote the noted Elizabethan comedy **'Tis Pity She's a Whore** and directed many of John Wayne's best films.* □

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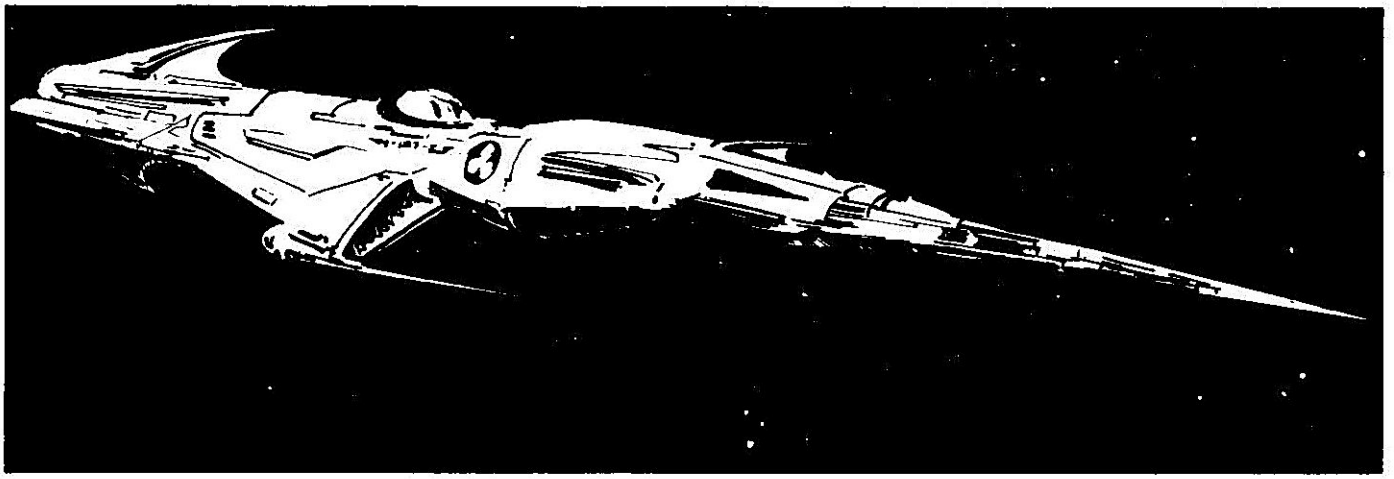

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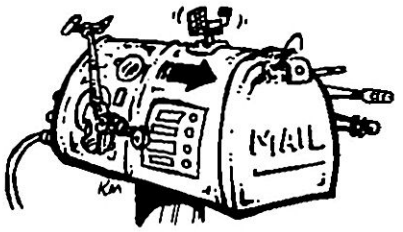

Letters

Correction

We at FGU would like to correct two errors that appeared in reviews of our products in the last issue of *Space Gamer*. As always, we have no objection to material within a review, whether favorable or unfavorable, but we would like to see the correct prices listed for our products.

Your reviews of ***The Dragon Lord*** (*C&S* adventure) and ***From the Deeps of Space*** (*V&V* adventure) listed prices of $6 and $5.95. Though I recognize that many FGU products look like $6 products from many other publishers, both of these products have a recommended retail price of $5. A correction would be appreciated.

Thank you,
Scott B. Bizar
Fantasy Games Unlimited
Mineola, NY

The State of the Art

Dear Allen,

Well, now that I've gotten that out of my system (see page 2), here's the serious commentary on your exchange with Warren [Counter Intelligence, *SG* 72]:

Character generation. I think this depends on the world-image the system is trying to create. In a superhero game, random selection of powers is inappropriate, and deliberate allocation of points seems right. In fantasy, I prefer to have random characters who have to choose a life-path based on their numbers. In science fiction, it seems right to have a set of basic parameters based on genotype and world of origin, with some room for variation (not to mention genetic engineering). But form follows function, and a case could be made for any system — or combination of systems, as in ***DragonQuest***. One possibility would be to have *both* dice and point-allocation available; dice would offer the chance for both great and terrible values. Ultimately, of course, no sane referee would force a player to use a character s/he detested, so all systems need some kind of limit on how rotten a result can appear.

No classes, alignments, levels: Absolutely. If the thieves want to unionize, they can hire a hall. Warren's comments about That Game seem to me irrelevant — it did not "pioneer" those subsystems, it used them as a substitute for something better, and in the years since has refused to even consider anything better. The sole virtue of classes and levels is that they clearly define character abilities — inflexibly, but clearly. Alignment has no virtues, unless the GM chooses to design a Moorcockian cosmos in which Law and Chaos are real elemental powers (which they are not in *D&D*).

Attributes and number-crunching: I think, again, form has to follow function. If the system relies heavily on attribute checks, then each type of aptitude needs a number. If the system is based on skills, only a few basic physical scores are needed. As for your distinctions — a watchmaker with polio has a high Dexterity but low Agility. Intelligence and Education barely correlate these days; I know geniuses who never finished high school and clods with doctorates.

Warren is quite right about Charisma, and the same argument may be applied to any attribute, even such things as Bravery (though I personally prefer to let players decide that for themselves): in an RPG *we are not ourselves, we are what the numbers say we are.*

As for formulas, I don't know where perfection lies. I like derived numbers — they make me feel that the character system has an internal logic — and I don't like spending an hour on every character sheet, nor equations that seem intended to impress me with the designer's cleverness (like ***Chivalry and Sorcery***).

Dice shapes: I would settle for sixes and percentiles. Some things need a flat curve, and percentage chance of success is easy to understand. As for the argument of history, the oldest of all dice are two-sided; the kings of Ur had tetrahedral four-siders; and the Romans had twenties (and fourteens — I've seen them in the British Museum). Six-sided dice, according to Murray's *History of Board Games*, were the last to be developed, in Asia Minor, 2700 years ago. (All authors have to know useless trivia like this.)

Incidentally, Warren, I am told that Lou Zocchi is about to announce a hundred-sided die. I presume it fits in a bowling bag.

Adaptability: I don't doubt that this is possible. I wonder if it's desirable — and I'm speaking here more as an author/artist than a rules mechanic. A fantasy world is not just a mock-feudal society with magic on top, because the existence of magic alters the course society takes just as completely as the Industrial Revolution did. It's easy to run the Old West and WWII and modern espionage with the same rules, because one evolved into the next — but a world with widespread magic is *different*, and furthermore different from a fantasy with different techniques and rituals of magic. And the same is true of a science-fiction world, because the nature of an interstellar civilization (if any) depends on the precise hardware characteristics of its transportation — FTL? Not as fast as light? Teleportation? — and weapons, and biology. Look at what happened to ***Car Wars*** when people realized the consequences of cheap Gold Cross cloning.

You mention the Hero Games system. I like that system a lot — and still I have artistic problems with it. Spider-Man webs somebody. Dr. Strange wraps them in the Crimson Bands of Cytorrak. Reed Richards uses a Stasis Ray (pat. pend.) — all of them are Entangle attacks, yet the processes involved are all very different. Sure, lots of colorful description by the GM and players is what makes the game — makes *any* RPG — but it seems to me that a truly universal system would be universally bland.

I would be quite happy to be wrong about this, of course, and I may well be. There are two types of rules design: number-crunching and inspirations. Every game system contains some of both. This problem will not be solved through crunching: it calls for a large swoop of inspiration, *followed* by patient and tedious hardware work.

Anyway, there hasn't been an argument like this in the pro press for too long, and it's necessary at intervals, just to clear the cobwebs. Thanks for starting it.

Yours &c.
John M. Ford
New York, NY

When you state it so baldly, the idea that we must play the characters the numbers dictate becomes even more reprehensible. Roleplaying should be an outlet for our repressed impulses to adventure and exuberance — a catharsis, more than an acting challenge. The antiquity of polyhedral dice seems to me a conclusive indictment: Were they any more than a fad, they would have remained popular through the centuries as six-siders have.

—AV

Dear Mr. Varney:

This letter is being written in response to your thought-provoking "Counter Intelligence" essay which appeared in *Space Gamer* #72. While Warren Spector has beaten us all to the punch (amazing what you can do when you share an office), I'd like to add a few thoughts of my own.

Customized Character Generation: I'll agree with you that a customized character generation system is more enjoyable than a random number generator. However, I must disagree that the only reason I play RPGs is for wish-fulfillment. A second aspect is play-acting. If I am given a string of random numbers, I must *act* to breathe life into those cold numbers. Some of my most enjoyable roleplaying experience has come from Earl Dumarest (Force Commander, Retired) who grew from a string of numbers generated from the ***Mercenary*** character generator in ***Traveller*** to a Clint Eastwood-like hero, bent on a quest across the Spinward Marches to return to his home planet of Earth (sure, it's been done before — but it was fun!).

Six-sided Dice: A point of disagreement. I'll agree that some designs are a little silly — sixty-seven sided dice, three-sided dice, one-sided dice . . . but I also feel that use of some of these strange shapes helps to introduce a little more flexibility in gaming systems. Also, how can you wish to see Euclidean solids only in math books and praise the bell curve at the same time? Both belong in the math book.

M.A.R. Barker has told me that he feels, in many ways, that the rules are superfluous — that the storyteller and the people listening to the story are the important factor. A great gaming system, fantastic support, and all the clear style and sensible organization in the world will not help if the referee and the players are not making an effort, or don't have the imagination, or just don't care. On the other hand, if the players are interested and care about their characters, and the referee has a brilliant imagination — even if the game mechanics are horrendous, that game will sparkle and grow for a long time. To use another example, good special effects don't make a good science fiction film. Good characters and a good story will be enhanced by good special effects.

You can't say definitely what the best is — as there will always be a crowd to challenge your statement. Infinite diversity, as a Vulcan once stated, leads to infinite combinations. Having a wide-open field of different gaming systems may be frustrating, but I'd rather have that than have games stifled due to lack of creativity.

Frederick Paul Kiesche III
East Brunswick, NJ

I just received *Space Gamer* #72. It was an interesting issue, and raised a lot of interesting points to talk about. Such as —

Counter Intelligence: I tend to share a lot of Allen's prejudices about game mechanics. (Sorry, Warren.) However, not all *my* criteria for a "state-of-the-art" RPG were included in the column. Counter Intelligence failed to deal with the "soft" side of RPGs — personality and gamemaster aid. (I realize that these aren't as clear-cut and definable as game mechanics, but they're easily as important.)

By "personality" I mean the way the written text captures the feel of the genre it's supposed to be simulating. It also means adventures and NPCs. Any game which does not include adventures and NPCs in its initial set or booklet is doing the prospective gamemaster a disservice. Such things serve as a starting point for beginners, and as examples for first-time adventure-designers and character-

(Continued on pg. 6)

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designers. Unfortunately, the very first RPG, ***Dungeons & Dragons***, was guilty of this omission (no campaign setting, no adventures in the boxed set, no NPCs) and future games, which copied *D&D*, had the same failing. You had to wait until ***Blackmoor*** came out to see how the "pros" did it.

"Gamemaster Aid" refers to some of the above stuff, but mainly refers to hard, experienced advice on how to be a gamemaster. Practically any game will say, "Be fair to your players," but that's not enough. A game must tell gamemasters how to improvise, how to plot adventures, how to sustain campaigns, etc. This is no more "hard mechanics" than the personality aspect, but is, in my opinion, just as vital as a character generation system. A good gamemaster can make any game system work. A bad gamemaster can't make the best game system work.

However, I have an objection about "Counter Intelligence." It was placed directly across from another ad for Steve's *GURPS* RPG. The column primes the readers, leaving them to ask, "Other than the Hero System, what's state of the art?" And then, by some miraculous coincidence, there's an ad for *GURPS*.

GURPS may indeed be the next state of the art. But, dammit, I'll make that determination, and so will every other buyer of the game. Back off, guys.

Letters: Well, the Costikyan/Greenwood controversy continues. My personal opinion, which is hardly unbiased, is that game designers need to be treated much as fiction writers (people such as John M. Ford are both). And the Avalon Hill/Metagaming attitude of "Company recognition is more important than designer recognition" gets on my nerves. A game company has to have consistent quality before it can justify such an attitude. No game company in existence has such a consistent quality. Including Avalon Hill.

TOON Review: I'm not sure that it's such a good idea to identify, in glaring boldface type, reviewer Ray Greer as a Hero Games employee. In the old days (dear God, now I sound like a geezer) I'd precede a review by a noted industry personality with an italicized graph explaining who he was. But the "Hero Games" you've tacked below Ray's name smacks of advertising. (The review itself was good.) [*We identify game company employees as such in their bylines because the reader has a right to know that the reviewer is — at least technically — a competitor of the publisher whose product is being reviewed. In Ray's case, another factor is that an SJ Games product was being reviewed by one of our buddies at Hero. Readers need to know these things. As it turns out, Ray's review was the least favorable of the many TOON has received. —The Editors*]

Costikyan Interview: I liked this. And Greg's right; the freelancer's life is "pretty grim, really." Add the unending struggle against bills and creditors to the fact that you don't have an umbrella over your head or a net under your feet — features of belonging to a stable company — and you end up with a chancy and sometimes very frustrating occupation. On the other hand, you don't have to deal with supervisors or subordinates, time-clocks or annual reviews, or any of the other exasperations of company life. It has its advantages.

Aaron Allston
Austin, TX

This Needed To Be Said

I am in total disagreement with Mr. Perez's letter in your column in *SG* #72.

It is immaterial whether characters have served 4 *years* or 4 *terms*. It doesn't matter whether they do it *normally* or not. If I should find *any* characters rolling on my table, I shall push them off onto the floor, and beat them unmercifully.

Phil Richards
Tampa, Florida

A Designers' Reply

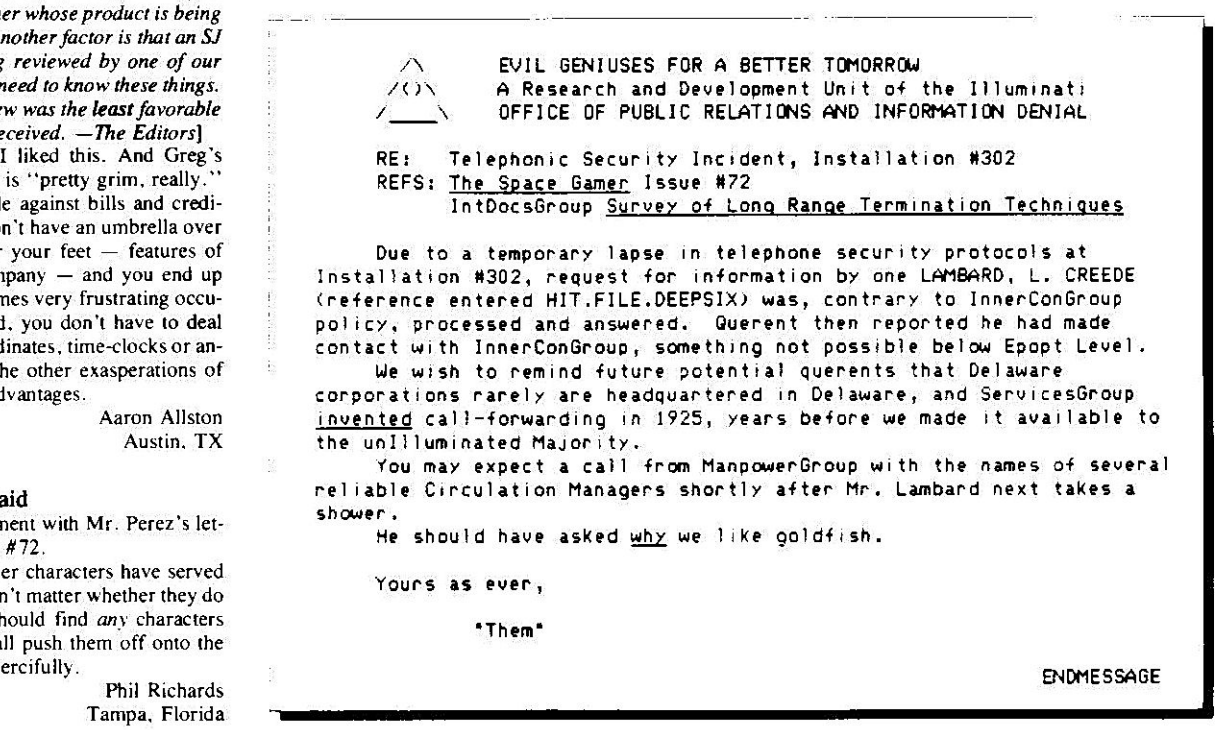
In the last issue of *Space Gamer*, #73, a review was done on ***Thieves' Guild***, a product of Gamelords, Ltd. We at Gamelords did not feel that the review was fair — it appears that the reviewer [Rick Swan] did not fully investigate the product that he was reviewing. As ***Thieves' Guild***'s designers, we feel it incumbent to provide some of the design theory involved in the creation of ***Thieves' Guild*** and ***The Fantasy System*** of which it is a part, to allow *Space Gamer*'s readers to make an adequate and informed judgment of the value of our product.

The Fantasy System is designed to be a *role-playing* system, and to be easy for a gamemaster to run as well. As a result of this aimed-at-full-role-playing design, character creation is a bit involved, although not quite as involved as the review would have it seem. We feel that to roleplay a character adequately, a player needs to know a bit more about him or her than race and six attributes — ten characteristics are used in ***The Fantasy System*** and ***Thieves' Guild***, to allow for a broad range of testing possibilities for saving rolls, and to distinguish between similar but different abilities (magnetism and appearance, rather than charisma, for example). Knowledge of a character's family background and the social class in which he was raised will provide a clue to the actions he will likely take under various circumstances. The inborn quirks and idiosyncrasies of a character provide color and interest for a gaming session, and allow a greater breadth to the role essayed by the player. A number of dice rolls are required to determine the basic parameters of the character, but a substantial portion of the creation process, including the original selection of race and sex, is the exercise of intelligent choice by the player constructing the character — the training fields in which the character is interested and the experience gained in them prior to the beginning of his adventuring career, the languages he may speak, his prowess with the weapons he favors, etc. All this playing capability does require a number of die rolls, ranging from probably two dozen or less to possibly as many as three dozen over the entire creation process; however, the information developed about a character is quite extensive, and allows the player to project himself into the character he has created much more fully than with many other roleplaying systems.

One of the other principles in the basic design was that the operation of characters' normal functions should not require consultation of numerous charts during a session of play; charts for use during setup of a character may be as complex as desired (within reason, of course), but everything necessary to play the character should be available to the player on his character sheet. The many charts referred to disparagingly in the review are there to stimulate ideas in the GM; they are not normally required during play, but may remind GMs of interesting facets of roleplaying, and suggest to scenario designers many different methods of handling different situations.

In actual play, all saving rolls are made against characteristics, and many different situations can be handled with these methods — one of our playtesting sessions involving a group of bandits and a stagecoach duplicated the (in)famous dragging-under-the-truck scene from *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, and it ran with little problem on the part of the GM. Combat is relatively simple — the character sheet indicates what a player needs to roll on a D20 to hit an unarmored foe with each of the weapons in which he is trained; since armor classes begin at 0 for totally unarmored beings and proceed upwards, all that is necessary to determine what is needed to strike any given foe is to add that foe's armor class to the base HAC0 (hits armor class zero) for the weapon being used. In most instances, the players can handle much of the inevitable donkey-work, and the GM is left free to plan, plot, and run the adventure without being drowned in chart-checking which drastically slows the course of play.

Most of the procedures given in ***Thieves' Guild***, the roguish rules for ***The Fantasy System***, are guidelines for GMs to follow — they may use or discard any they please. The example given in the review, involving listening at the door, is unnecessarily complicated as well as misleading — one can hear sounds through a door on the normal hearing chance, provided on the character sheet; the additional adjustments could be used, *if desired by the GM*, to determine whether the character hears mere noises, a mumble, or actual words; understanding of any words heard depends, of course, on whether or not the character knows the language being spoken. The additional rules in the ***Thieves' Guild***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EVIL GENIUSES FOR A BETTER TOMORROW
A Research and Development Unit of the Illuminati
OFFICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AND INFORMATION DENIAL
RE: Telephonic Security Incident, Installation #302
REFS: The Space Gamer Issue #72
IntDocsGroup Survey of Long Range Termination Techniques
Due to a temporary lapse in telephone security protocols at Installation #302, request for information by one LAMBARD, L. CREEDE (reference entered HIT.FILE.DEEPSIX) was, contrary to InnerConGroup policy, processed and answered. Querent then reported he had made contact with InnerConGroup, something not possible below Epopt Level.
We wish to remind future potential querents that Delaware corporations rarely are headquartered in Delaware, and ServicesGroup invented call-forwarding in 1925, years before we made it available to the unIlluminated Majority.
You may expect a call from ManpowerGroup with the names of several reliable Circulation Managers shortly after Mr. Lambard next takes a shower.
He should have asked why we like goldfish.
Yours as ever,
"Them"
ENDMESSAGE

book, involving such material as disguise, tailing, and sensory applications, etc., are provided to encourage GMs to think of interesting applications as they design their scenarios, not to hogtie them with complex rules during play. In most cases, annotations of adjustments regarding use of sensory or other statistics listed on the scenario outline will give the GM all the data he needs while running the adventure session.

Overall, the intended effect of ***Thieves' Guild*** and ***The Fantasy System*** is to promote (and make easier to accomplish) actual roleplaying, wherein the players become their characters and interact with the other denizens of the world in which they find themselves, rather than simple hunt, kill, and loot tactics. Gamelords has been accused, in some previous reviews of our products, of moving toward improvisational theater; we took this as a compliment rather than as a slur, since true roleplaying *is* improvisational theater. ***Thieves' Guild*** is complex, true, but the complexity of charts and tables is found in the character creation and development process, and in scenario development, but not in play.

One of the major portions of ***Thieves' Guild*** is the scenarios that accompany the package — these were almost entirely disregarded in the review, although the encounters for players acting as highwaymen on the local roads were briefly mentioned. Two complete, highly detailed adventures are also included, as well as the aforementioned highwaymen encounters, in a 32-page booklet with an accompanying 4-page map folder, a third of the ***Thieves' Guild*** boxed set. This scenario feature is a large part of all ***Thieves' Guild*** material, and makes a supplement/systems set more than just a set of rules — it is now a ready-to-play game.

In closing, we'd like to make one final observation — in the five years that we have been selling the original (and currently the revised) ***Thieves' Guild*** system, we've found that the vast majority of our customers have become regular buyers of the so-called expensive ***Thieves' Guild*** supplements. We think that this is the best test of whether ***Thieves' Guild*** is a playable and enjoyable system — and hope that *Space Gamer*'s readership is not turned off from investigating ***Thieves' Guild*** by Mr. Swan's review.

Richard K. Meyer
Kerry D. Lloyd
Michael K. Watkins
Co-designers, Gamelords, Ltd.

*We stand by Rick Swan's review. His contentions are well-supported by the evidence of the game. He clearly stated that **Thieves' Guild**'s complex calculations aren't necessary to play, and took issue only with its approach: "Depth of involvement in roleplaying," he said, "comes from the imagination of the players (with suggestions from the system), not from the amount of formulas and charts" the game provides (p. 20). We agree completely — but we recognize the designers' right of response.*
—The Editors

A New *Ogre/G.E.V.* Unit

One of the most important obstacles to modern combat units is water in its many forms. In *Ogre/G.E.V.*, streams, rivers, and swamps can greatly slow down an attack or impair retreat. A partial solution to the problem is a special unit known as the Mobile Bridge, or MB.

The MB is a special armor unit which has a very limited combat capacity. Its main function is to create temporary bridges across streams, rivers, and swamps. The MB consists of a flat, treaded vehicle equipped with folding panels and flotation units for constructing bridges. It has a defense of 2, a movement of 2, an attack of 1, and a range of 1. It is affected by terrain as a heavy tank and follows all movement, ramming, carrying rules, etc., as a heavy tank. The only difference is that the MB can move into a river hex at a cost of two movement points. It costs one armor unit to purchase.

The MB can make a bridge across one hex of stream, river, or swamp. It takes it no time, except for moving into the stream hex, to establish a bridge across a stream. It takes it one full movement phase to establish a bridge over a river hex or a swamp. During that phase it cannot move, and other units cannot cross it.

Once put up, the MB bridge is treated exactly as a regular bridge, except that only heavy tanks or smaller units may cross it. Ogres, Missile Crawlers, etc. are far too large and heavy for the MB to support.

The MB may hold only one unit at a time as it crosses. To simulate this, the 1 MP a unit takes to cross to the other side is subtracted from the MP of the *other* units attempting to cross. This subtraction is cumulative for subsequent units using the MB that turn. For example, a light tank (M2) crosses and moves one hex forward. Behind it, a heavy tank (M3, but 1 is subtracted) moves across and one hex forward. The next heavy tank (also M3) moves onto the bridge but cannot move further, since waiting for the other units to cross the MB used up two of its movement points.

Combat and miscellaneous rules are as follows. A unit on the MB when it is destroyed is not destroyed unless it is not a water-capable unit and is dumped into a river. To clarify, a unit that can move in a stream or swamp will not be destroyed by the destruction of the MB, as it is low enough for the fall to be of little consequence. However, the unit must check terrain. For example, a light tank on a MB that is destroyed may get stuck in the swamp beneath it.

If a unit on the MB is attacked, the MB suffers normal spillover fire (and vice versa). The MB itself can always fire as long as it is not disabled, even when a unit is crossing it. Disabling a MB, in addition to its regular effects, prevents the MB from putting up or taking down its bridge. The MB must spend the same time it took putting it up to take it down. The MB may not move unless its bridge is folded up.

I have found the MB to be very useful when my opponent has destroyed the bridges I must cross to attack him. An MB or two is very useful in attacking from an unexpected angle, or to get at infantry who have holed themselves up in a swamp. Another rule I have experimented with allows the MB to use its cranes, winches, and flotation devices to pull out a unit trapped in the swamp: a roll of 5 or 6 on 1d6 to free a heavy tank, and a six to free a Ogre. It would take one movement phase to free a heavy tank, two to free a missile crawler, three to free an Ogre Mark III, and four to free a Mark IV or V.

Michael LaBossiere
Marietta, OH

Thanks for the description. This obviously wants playtesting; anybody care to pass along the results?
—The Editors

The Weird Store Clerk

"Our team doesn't have a player who can hit 60 home runs," the baseball manager said ruthlessly.

If you can remember weirdness like that or such goodies as "'I'll have a martini,' Tom said drily," you were around in the early Sixties when a popular party game was "Tom Swifties." It got its name from the old Tom Swift science fiction novels whose hero never just "said" something. He always stammered, blurted, speculated, etc.

Well, 20 years have passed since the heyday of Tom Swifties, but I think I have found just the game for gamers who need to fill some time between wargame or RPG sessions. I call my invention "The Weird Store Clerk."

Let's face it. We've all gone into a store looking for a gaming product, only to encounter a clerk who didn't have the vaguest idea what we were talking about.

The following conversation actually occurred at a Norman, Oklahoma bookstore. I know; I was the clerk. Some four years ago, I had heard of ***Dungeons & Dragons*** but was unfamiliar with the term "D&D". The following is what happened:

Teenager: "Do you have anything on ***D&D?***"

Clerk: "Why yes, we do. Go down to that section that says 'Plants and Gardening.' All our stuff on pesticides is over there."

So here's how the game "The Weird Store Clerk" works.

One player asks for a gaming product and the other players try to come up with a response that a weird store clerk would give. Examples follow:

"Do you have ***Deities and Demigods?***"
Clerk: "We have some sales clerks who think they're hot stuff."

Gamer wanting lead miniatures: "Do you have a cold drake?"
Clerk: "No. You need to check out the liquor store across the street."

"Do you have ***Dragonrage*** (the Dwarfstar game)?"
Clerk: "No. I try not to get violent even when hassled by weird customers."

"Do you have ***Bug-Eyed Monsters?***"
Clerk: "We do get some pretty strange college students."

Gamer wanting Tunnels & Trolls: "Do you have *T&T?*"
Clerk: "No, but the construction company on South Main carries explosives."

"Do you have anything by Flying Buffalo?"
Clerk: "No. We let the record store down the street handle anything to do with weird rock groups."

"Do you have *Paranoia?*"
Clerk: "No more than most people. But my Uncle Fred. Now there's a case. He says the commies are everywhere."

"Do you have ***The Creature That Ate Sheboygan?***"
Clerk: "What do you think we are? A Japanese pet store?"

"Do you have *TOON?*"
Clerk: "Yes. It's 4 o'clock."

Steve LaPrade
Norman, OK

We Get Letters Like This All the Time

I just got some back issues of *SG*, and saw your Trivial Spell Contest in issue 57. It may be late, but here is a comedy relief spell I have been using in *AD&D* for about a month:

Throw Moose (Conjuration/Tossing)

Level: 5	Components: V, S
Range: special	Casting Time: 1 rd.
Duration: special	Saving Throw: none
Area of Effect: special	

Explanation/Description: Upon casting this spell, the Magic-User summons a moose from the Prime Mooseterial Plane and sends it hurling at any three people in a group, doing 4d8 points of damage to the victim(s). The moose then falls unconscious for 1d6 hrs. and then wanders around the area thrown looking for its mommy.

Dink Thacker
Piedmont, AL

During the Holocaust

TWILIGHT: 2000

by Rick Swan

It seems there's never been a whole lot of crossover between wargame enthusiasts and roleplaying fans. Hardcore wargamers tend to dismiss games like ***Dungeons & Dragons*** and ***Call of Cthulhu*** as childish and silly, while many roleplayers find mastering ***Panzergruppe Guderian*** to be about as much fun as studying for a history final.

Twilight: 2000 may change all that. Let's say this up front: ***Twilight: 2000*** is the most successful bridge between conventional wargames and roleplaying published to date. If it doesn't bring the two camps closer together, it probably can't be done.

Twilight: 2000 is a roleplaying game set in an after-the-holocaust future, but it owes more to ***Squad Leader*** than it does to, say, ***Gamma World***. Like ***Squad Leader*** (perhaps the most playable wargaming system on the market, and certainly worth your investigation), ***Twilight: 2000*** puts all-too-human soldiers into hostile territory against unpredictable enemies. There's not a bug-eyed monster or evil alien in sight. In fact, take away the "future history" background and ***Twilight: 2000*** would work just as well in a World War II setting. (Are you listening, GDW?)

Equipment Check

As all ***Traveller*** lovers know, GDW products are consistently well produced and ***Twilight: 2000*** is no exception. The two rules manuals (one for players and one for the referee) are clean and clutter-free. For your shopping pleasure, there's a twelve-page equipment list describing hundreds of weapons, vehicles, and miscellaneous supplies. Another booklet contains all the charts and tables needed for play (far handier than an awkward referee's screen, and certainly preferable to frantically thumbing through the rulebooks). A handful of assorted play aids and a brief introductory adventure complete the package.

Now nobody's going to accuse GDW of being overly generous with components — your eighteen dollars doesn't get you all that much material. However, unlike other packages which claim to be complete (but aren't without a supplement or two), the ***Twilight: 2000*** box contains everything you'll need to get started. You can even skip that all-too-familiar trip to the copying machine to run off extra character sheets.

Basic Training

One item in the box that may have you looking twice is the "Character Generation Worksheet" — it looks more like a math test than a game component. Not to worry. The character generation system is generally easy to follow and produces consistently sensible characters. And in a game that emphasizes realism as much as ***Twilight: 2000***, it's important not to wind up with super-strong weaklings or twenty-year-old generals.

Basic attributes of fitness, agility, constitution, stature (physical size), intelligence, and education are generated by rolling 4D6, and subsequent characteristics are derived from these. Some of the formulas, however, are absurdly convoluted. To determine age, for instance, you divide the number of months in combat by 12, add the result to the education roll, add a modifier, and then add 8. The results make sense, and you can almost hear designer Frank Chadwick applauding his own cleverness, but why go through all this number-juggling for what are essentially trivial characteristics? Why not just let the players choose from a range of possibilities? It took me two hours to roll up a character and outfit him, and that's time I'd rather have spent playing the game.

Vehicle statistics are also unnecessarily complex. Each vehicle requires its own record sheet and detailed bookkeeping. Realistic, maybe. Tiresome, absolutely. I suspect Chadwick has been spending a little too much time with ***Car Wars***. Faced with handling yet another statistic sheet, players stumbling upon an abandoned tank in the heat of the game are going to think twice before taking it, and that surely can't be what Chadwick had in mind.

Skill selection is much less tedious and quite similar to the basic system used in Chaosium games. Players are given a number of "skill points" with which to "buy" skills from a lengthy list of possibilities, limited somewhat by the specialty of their character. Success or failure in skill use is determined by a percentile roll. Skills may be improved through experience, calculated with another convoluted formula.

Fists and Firearms

Combat is mercifully straightforward, requiring few calculations and a minimum of modifiers. Basically, an appropriate skill roll is made to determine if a target is hit, followed by rolls to determine hit location and the amount of damage. It works well and, more importantly, keeps the battles brisk and exciting.

I wouldn't go so far as to say the combat rules are the "major breakthrough" claimed on the box, but the "Coolness Under Fire" rule does deserve a special mention. Taking a tip from ***Squad Leader***, the rule acknowledges the very real possibility that soldiers may panic under the pressures of combat and won't fight back. Each ***Twilight: 2000*** character has his own "coolness" rating that determines how long he'll hesitate when under fire — the higher the rating, the longer he'll freeze. It's a simple but elegant rule that adds considerably to both the tension and realism.

Additional combat rules nicely cover explosives, minefields, and even chemical warfare. Again, the rules tend to bog down when dealing with vehicle damage — a single shelling will stop the game cold while seemingly endless rolls and calculations are made to see what happened — but the procedures can be simplified without too much trouble (by ignoring them and making up your own).

Moving Out

An eight-page "Chronological Background" near the end of the Referee's Manual

explains in detail the future history setting, beginning with the outbreak of full-scale war between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China and ending some years later with the nuclear devastation of most of the civilized world. After the fallout has settled, our players find themselves somewhere in the outlands of a ravaged Poland, cut off from their own Army and surrounded by pockets of hostile troops.

So now what?

In the words of E.T.: "Go Home." As the Referee's Manual points out, that'd be the obvious goal of American soldiers caught behind enemy lines in a war-torn Europe. "Not home to the Army in Germany," writes designer Chadwick, "but really home to the United States. It's not the sort of goal they are likely to achieve in a week, or a month, or even a year. But if they keep moving, keep gathering information, keep looking for ways, they may eventually find a way home."

Home! Now if that's not a goal compelling enough to keep your players interested, then you've got a real bunch of cold-hearts on your hands. Naturally, the journey back to whatever's left of the old hometown is a tough one. Enemy forces, disease, scarcity of food and fuel, and the ever-present threat of radiation poisoning all add up to a genuine challenge. I've yet to come across a more engaging premise for a roleplaying campaign. And a war-based game that still retains such a strong sense of humanity is an accomplishment by any standards.

Unfortunately, ***Twilight: 2000*** continues in the grand tradition of basic sets by including a substandard introductory adventure as part of the package. "Escape From Kalisz" is so sketchy (not a single NPC is described and the situation is directionless) that you may as well write your own. Let's hope that GDW doesn't waste any time in publishing some adventures worthy of the system.

Building Bridges

The ***Twilight: 2000*** system could so easily be adapted to simulate actual historical situations that the cynic in me suspects that the post-holocaust elements were added to hook the science fiction and fantasy fans (i.e., the key roleplaying market). That's not to say those people won't enjoy it; I just suggest they check it first.

Whether or not ***Twilight: 2000*** becomes a standard remains to be seen, but it certainly fills a niche and does so successfully. I hope it finds an audience with roleplayers and wargamers alike. As a design, it's nothing spectacular, but as a concept, it's an innovation. Bring on the adventures!

TWILIGHT: 2000 (Game Designers' Workshop); $18. Designed by Frank Chadwick. One 24-page Play Manual, one 32-page Referee's Manual, one 12-page equipment list, one 8-page introductory adventure, one 11" x 17" mapsheet, various play aids, one 10-sided die, four 6-sided dice. Number of players and playing time indefinite. Published 1984. □

Another View

Twilight: 2000 is a roleplaying game of survival in a devastated world. Characters play soldiers of various NATO countries trying to survive in Europe five years into a largely non-nuclear WWIII. Characters must struggle for simple survival as well as against enemy units and marauders. Scarce supplies, cranky equipment, and not-always-friendly locals are typical problems. Skills and attribute rolls are based on percentile dice, and rolls are classed into three levels of difficulty. Character generation is relatively simple but complete. Characters are developed randomly, but checks and balances insure that no characters are ruined by poor rolls.

The character generation system is very nice, allowing a fleshed-out character with a minimum of hassle. A useful touch is the character generation sheet: This covers all initial rolls, secondary characteristics, etc., and keeps clutter and stray calculations off the character sheet. The end result is a neater and more readable character. The separation of the rules into smaller sections allows everyone to get a piece of the action. This in turn allows time for an adventure in the same session that characters are created. The equipment list is very thorough, covering a lot of weapons and paraphernalia that would be in use 10 to 15 years from now, including a few items that are experimental at this point. The designer thankfully ignored the temptation to include laser rifles and the like, as we aren't going to have them short of a major breakthrough. The mechanics of play are simple, without a lot of complicated tables. The game was obviously designed to be fast-paced, with more emphasis on action, and less on rule-finding.

It's all downhill from here, though. The skill abbreviations are cryptic at best. While this might be okay for the Army, players may have trouble deciphering the various three-letter codes for each skill. Also, there is a full page of errata. With only 90-odd pages of rules and ancillary material, this leads me to believe that more care could have been put into the production of the game. Not that it matters — the combat system, which should have been a strong suit for this game, is abysmal. Example: Joe Macho, average soldier, goes for a walk and ambushes some enemy APCs. Armed only with his trusty G11 "submachine gun," he ventilates several of them before they spot him and return fire. He is wearing a Kevlar vest and helmet, so the 23mm high-explosive *cannon* shells that hit him in the chest and head do no damage, other than knocking him down. Angered by this, he leaps to his feet and clambers onto the rear deck of a passing T-72. Blasting away, he puts a few dozen holes in it before jumping off. At this point the scene mercifully ends as he is hit in the chest with a 75mm HE round. It doesn't quite kill him, but it will suffice. It doesn't get any better; there isn't enough room here to go into further detail. I personally feel that designer Frank Chadwick should be shot with 23mm HE shells while wearing a Kevlar vest to be taught a lesson — a *short* lesson, but it might serve as an example to others. A general complaint I have involves the price of the game. Sure, advertising is needed to sell a product, but how much of my hard-earned money is paying for multi-page four-color ads in game magazines? Ads like that don't come cheap, and I would rather see less advertising and a better price.

All told, ***Twilight: 2000*** is a tragic waste of 18 bucks. The nice concept and character generation system are completely overrun by innumerable flaws and hopeless violations of the laws of physics. If you insist on buying this game, read a friend's copy first. I wish I had.

—Greg Porter

CTHULHU

Sixty Years Later

by Greg Porter

Illustrations by Kim Strombo

July 17, [1982,] 1710 GMT (July 18, 0110 Western Australia Standard Time) — Residents of Western Australia observed a magnitude +2 orange-red fireball that appeared near the star Fomalhaut and moved rapidly northwest; after travelling 20°-25°, it disappeared, then reappeared at right ascension 311°, declination +4°, as a magnitude −7 blue object. As it headed northwest at increasing speed it emitted many magnitude −2 to +2 fragments; it terminated with a magnitude −11 violet blue flash, leaving 3 or 4 small magnitude 0 to −2 fragments that continued 4°-5° towards the horizon before disappearing. A blue train could be seen for 10 minutes with the unaided eye, and for 10 minutes more with 10x50 binoculars.

Geotimes Report
Vol. 28, 1983

You don't hear much about the Elder Gods nowadays, but that doesn't mean they've given up on regaining Earth. Adventures can be run with modern characters against the minions of Cthulhu and others.

With most of the earth mapped and monitored by satellite, any major event would be investigated within hours of its occurrence. A recent example is the El Chichon volcano: Its eruption was unexpected, and in a remote area, but scientists were swarming over the area as fast as they could get there. If R'lyeh were to appear in the upheaval of a Pacific seamount, it would be swarming with geologists and archeologists before it was even dry. After most of these were eaten, the battleship *New Jersey* would be called in. Granted, Cthulhu probably takes minimum damage from 16-inch explosive shells, but what *is* minimum damage for 16-inch explosive shells? This illustrates the problem of technology vs. Lovecraft. ("Red Wing 1, we have a bogey coming in on 140, radar signature indicating an Elder God of the Hastur class. Orders are to intercept and destroy. Over.") If the creature exists on this plane, we can blow it out of existence.

Also, it takes more than just plain ugly to drive people insane. The average person has grown up in an era of very rapid change. Just because something is *really* different is no reason to become unhinged. Special effects technology has reached incredible levels. The movie *The Thing* is a good example of this. If the average person were to see a group of Deep Ones walking down the street, rather than running off in horror, the first reaction would be to look for a camera or go ask about the costumes. Convincing people you're an extra-dimensional horror is difficult these days.

On the flip side, much of the world is hidden, even with our technology. Aside from sonar surveys, mankind has actually seen little of the ocean depths. Can we be sure that the foot-wide sucker scars on sperm whales were made by giant squids? As an example of mankind's limitations, we cannot even confirm or deny the existence of the Loch Ness Monster.

There are still aboveground areas that have never been seen by the civilized world, areas where strange rites and religions are practiced away from prying eyes. Even in the US, hundreds of people disappear every day in the major cities — the homeless, runaways, street people, people who cannot be traced or won't be missed. Who knows what happens to them, or what ghastly ends they may come to? And disappearances are not restricted to the cities. There are lots of pleasant little towns on scenic highways where travellers could disappear without a trace.

A lot of the terror in the Cthulhu Mythos is more than just ugly. We are used to dealing with three dimensions (four if you count time), and our world view is based on this. A lot of Mythos creatures have an extra-dimensional component projected onto this plane. Prolonged exposure to this can so unravel our perception of reality that we no longer see the world as it really is. We go insane. Creatures from the Cthulhu Mythos are sometimes things that should not be, things whose very existence denies reality. Someone who has seen and understood can sometimes impart this information to others, either through speech, pictures, or writings. These can also drive men mad if comprehended.

Where's He Been Lately?

There are several justifications for modern adventures involving the Cthulhu Mythos — and why you don't hear much about them. The government could be covering up incidents of this type; even worse, it could be the cause of such incidents. During Project Blue Book (the official UFO investigative project), there were reports of mysterious "Men in Black," who

would find witnesses to UFO events and silence them, usually by a combination of threats and confiscation of evidence. Who's to say that the same hasn't happened in recent years?

On March 13, 1968, weather miscalculations caused the death of 6400 Utah sheep in a nerve gas test. The lethal vapors were carried over their pastures by unforeseen winds. A *plausible* explanation, but there are other things capable of killing thousands of animals without a trace. Then there are the cattle mutilations. Who (or what) is really behind them?

Events are not limited to the United States. There have been Russian "reactor accidents" and "arms depot explosions," little word of which has gotten out. Recently the Soviet Union was planning on rerouting some rivers that empty into the Arctic. Supposedly it will increase the water supply to the south; one of the possible side effects is a partial melting of the polar ice cap. The project as yet is not underway. Perhaps the Russians found something up there better left frozen!

Mythos incidents may be occurring all the time; they may be covered up. Any group of characters stumbling onto events of this type must either keep a tight lid on the knowledge or possibly face a lifetime of harassment and censure.

The Elder Gods might also be trying to gain control of the government of a country. The most logical reason for this would be either to start a nuclear war (if a major country), or to have a secure power base (if a minor country is involved). A nuclear war would effectively remove man's ability to fight the Elder Gods, and so leave the planet defenseless. Taking over a Third World country with rigid customs inspections, limited freedom, and secret police would allow a revival of the old customs and practices, and provide a way to silence any opposition to or discovery of these practices. Plots of this type are long-term, with conversion or replacement of key figures, unfortunate "accidents" allowing a controlled person to take a key position, etc. Characters getting involved with this may find they have stumbled upon the tip of a monstrous iceberg. Their actions may follow them for the rest of their lives. If the characters discover anything of importance, they will be threats to the cause for as long as they live.

Lastly, the Elder Gods may just be waiting. They are old, and patient. Mankind will eventually disappear, as is the way of evolution. When humankind is gone, once more shall the Elder Gods return. Events that occur are just isolated incidents. This could be a small group of worshippers, a researcher of arcane disciplines who has released a minor creature, or some such event. The event is likely to be isolated, and once resolved there will be few or no aftereffects.

On Running A Modern Mythos

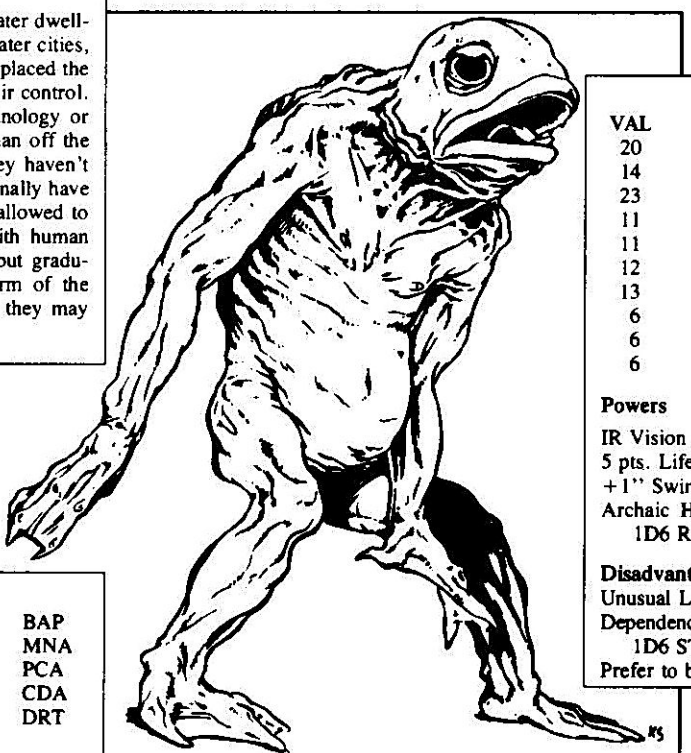
Adventures of this type are more suited to a mini-campaign, or individual adventures now and then; they don't work too well on a constant basis. Perhaps the best system for such a campaign is ***Espionage***. Instead of Sanity (***Call of Cthulhu***), the characters can use Ego rolls, and Psychological Limitations can represent psychoses or insanity. All Mythos creature should have high Presence, with appropriate reputation modifiers for those who have dealt with them. The creatures are brutal, and no prisoners are taken unless there is a specific reason. More powerful creatures are usually going to kill whatever they can get their hands (or other appendages) on. If anything is reported to the authorities, characters will in all probability be held in custody (if possible) until a full statement (including verifiable name and address) is given. Raving lunatics will be held for treatment, and in most cases the characters will be given the same respect as UFO witnesses ("So you say you saw a monster, 8 feet tall, scaly, webbed fingers . . . right"). These ideas present situations unlike any encountered before, and offer a unique challenge to players who expect everything to go by the rules. □

Some Ancient Foes in Modern Terms:

Cthulhoid Creatures in *Aftermath* and the Hero System

Deep Ones

Deep Ones are a race of humanoid water dwellers. They are bipedal and live in underwater cities, usually near the coast. Eons ago they displaced the Old Ones, and are now undisputed in their control. They may be possessed of ancient technology or powers, as it is said they could clean man off the Earth if they so desired. The reason they haven't done this is largely apathy. They occasionally have commerce with humans, and some are allowed to join their rites. They can also mate with human females. The offspring appear normal, but gradually change to the gilled, repulsive form of the father, and must return to the ocean so they may live.



Aftermath

15	WIT	12	BAP
15	WIL	3	MNA
42	STR	4	PCA
24	DFT	2	CDA
24	SPD	74	DRT
51	HLH		

Skills — Brawling, BCS = 10
— Trident, BCS = 10
— Crossbow, BCS = 8

Powers — Receptive Eye Mutation

Hero System

VAL	CHA	VAL	CHA
20	STR	3	SPD
14	DEX	8	REC
23	CON	46	END
11	INT	34	STUN
11	EGO		
12	BODY	OCV: 5	
13	PRE	DCV: 5	
6	COM	ECV: 4	
6	PD	PHA: 4, 8, 12	
6	ED		

Powers

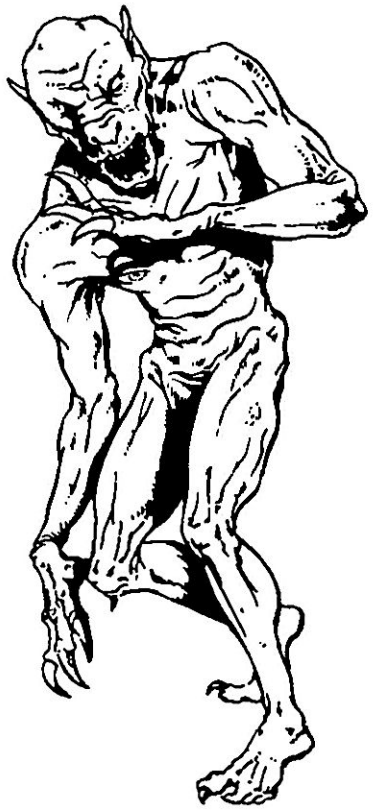
IR Vision
5 pts. Life Support
+1" Swimming
Archaic HTH or Ranged Weapon (1D6 HKA or 1D6 RKA)

Disadvantages

Unusual Looks, 11 or less
Dependence on immersion in water (once per day, 1D6 STUN)
Prefer to be left alone

Ghouls

Ghouls are loathsome humanoid creatures, living off human corpses (preferably fresh). They have greyish, rubbery skin, and look and smell extraordinarily bad. Preferring to dwell below ground, they usually live in tunnels beneath cities, where there is a large supply of fresh corpses. They usually attack with their filthy claws, and any attack that draws blood will become infected.



Aftermath

6	WIT	7	BAP
15	WIL	3	MNA
30	STR	2	PCA
15	DFT	2	CDA
15	SPD	58	DRT
36	HLH		

Skills — Brawling, BCS = 11
Powers — Receptive Eye Mutation
Notes — Hands do damage with WDM of 1.2B

Hero System

VAL	CHA	VAL	CHA
16	STR	3	SPD
11	DEX	7	REC
18	CON	36	END
8	INT	28	STUN
11	EGO		
11	BODY	OCV: 4	
12	PRE	DCV: 4	
6	COM	ECV: 4	
5	PD	PHA: 4, 8, 12	
5	ED		

Powers

IR Vision
1D6 HKA or +2 skill with Killing Blow

Disadvantages

Unusual Looks, 11 or less
2x BODY from Flash attacks
Dependence on Human Flesh (once per day, 1D6 STUN)

Notes

Ghouls do not suffer from bleeding effects

Shoggoths

Shoggoths are shapeless entities composed of a viscous jelly. They are loathsome to behold, and look like an agglutination of bubbles roughly 5 meters in diameter when a sphere. They can constantly shift in shape and volume, and can form their substance at will into nearly any shape, such as eyes, ears, tentacles, claws, etc. They are extremely difficult to kill. Shoggoths are fairly susceptible to mind control, though some have overcome this liability. These are more dangerous than the others, as they have a small amount of intelligence.

Aftermath

2	WIT	7	BAP
6	WIL	3	MNA
72	STR	2	PCA
15	DFT	2	CDA
15	SPD	107	DRT
66	HLH		

Skills — Brawling, BCS = 20/1
Notes — Shoggoths do not take Critical Damage, and heal Damage Points as Subdual Damage.

Hero System

VAL	CHA	VAL	CHA
30	STR	6	SPD
11	DEX	12	REC
30	CON	60	END
3	INT	60	STUN
8	EGO		
30	BODY	OCV: 4	
30	PRE	DCV: 4	
2	COM	ECV: 3	
8	PD	PHA: 2, 4, 6,	
8	ED	8, 10, 12	

Powers

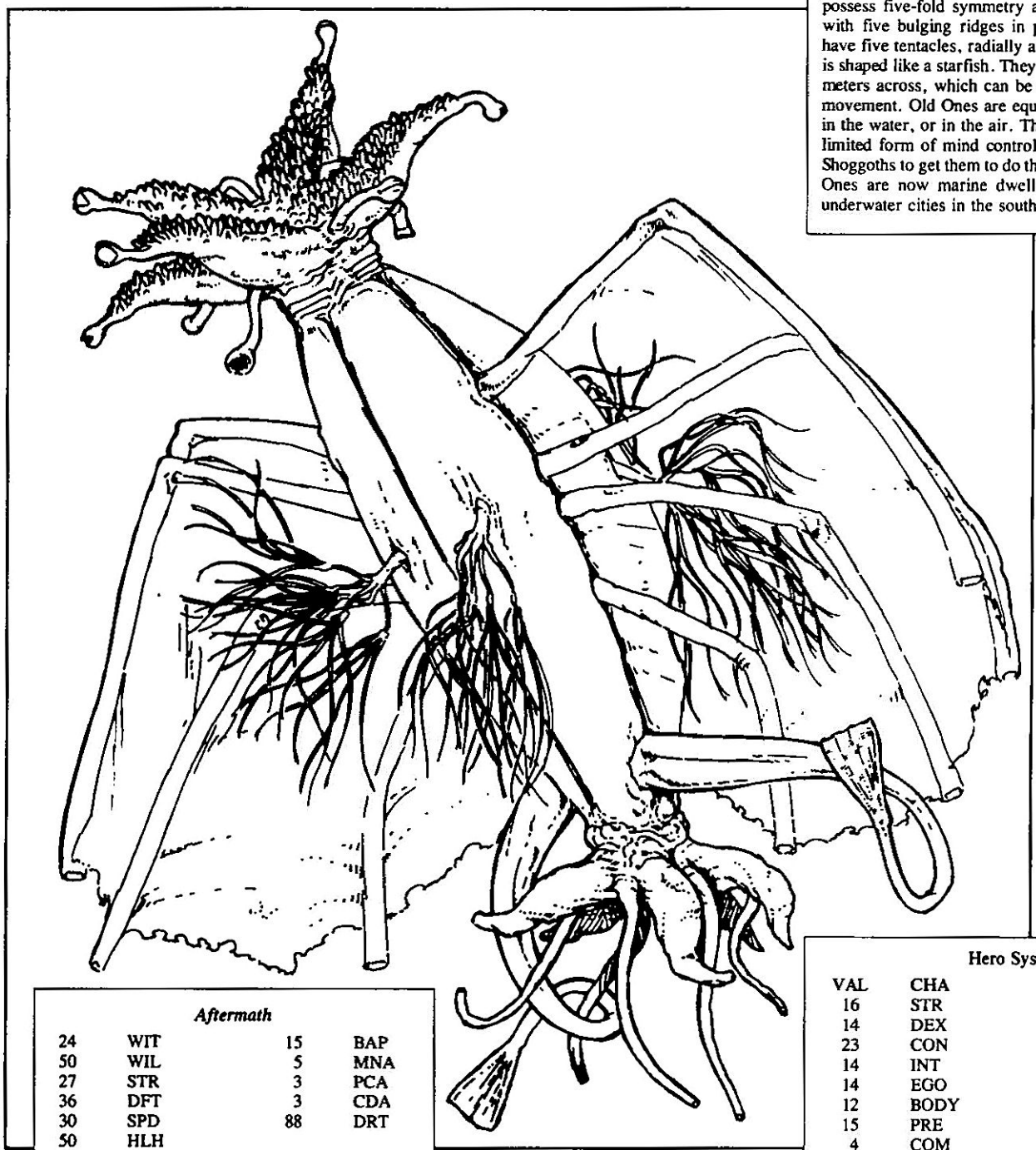
3 levels Growth, always on
3" Stretching, 0 END
Base Shapeshift (15 pts)
Regeneration, 4 BODY per recovery
½ Damage Reduction, Physical and Energy Resistant
5 pts Life Support

Disadvantages

Mindlessly Violent
2x effect from Mind Control
Unusual Looks, 14 or less
Dependence on immersion in water (once per day, 1D6, STUN)
Maximum movement of 3" per move

Old Ones

Old Ones are roughly man-sized creatures that possess five-fold symmetry and look like a barrel with five bulging ridges in place of staves. They have five tentacles, radially arranged, and the head is shaped like a starfish. They have wings roughly 2 meters across, which can be used for water or air movement. Old Ones are equally at home on land, in the water, or in the air. They are possessed of a limited form of mind control, which they used on Shoggoths to get them to do their bidding. Most Old Ones are now marine dwellers, living mainly in underwater cities in the southern hemisphere.



Aftermath

24	WIT	15	BAP
50	WIL	5	MNA
27	STR	3	PCA
36	DFT	3	CDA
30	SPD	88	DRT
50	HLH		
10	PSI		

Skills — Brawling, BCS = 14
— Swimming, BCS = 17, BMA = 2
— Flight, BCS = 16, BMA = 4

Powers — Psychic Induction

Notes — In HTH combat they may do damage with a WDM of .7L. They may make up to 5 attacks, with no off-hand minus, taking a −2 to all advanced attacks per extra attack made. They have a natural armor value of 4 (AH).

Hero System

VAL	CHA	VAL	CHA
16	STR	4	SPD
14	DEX	8	REC
23	CON	46	END
14	INT	32	STUN
14	EGO		
12	BODY	OCV: 5	
15	PRE	DCV: 5	
4	COM	ECV: 5	
8	PD	PHA: 3, 6, 9, 12	
8	ED		

Powers

3 Extra Limbs
5 pts. Life Support
+1" Swimming
20 pts. Flight
6D6 Mind Control
½ Damage Resistance vs HTH Killing
½D6 HKA (1D6 with STR)

Disadvantages

Curious
Totally Amoral
1.5x STUN from cold-based attacks
Unusual Looks, 14 or less

The New *Call of Cthulhu* Adventure

Masks of Nyarlathotep

Review by Matthew J. Costello

The world was a bigger place decades ago, and, as any *National Geographic* of the 1930s demonstrates, decidedly exotic. Air travel was in its infancy, and long, trans-oceanic steamship journeys let passengers know that they were indeed going someplace far away. Who hasn't seen a travel map from a '30s movie, with its moving arrow showing the perilous journey of the film's hero?

While he seemed most at home in a nice, balanced New England community filled with the terribly inbred offspring of humans and Deep Ones, H.P. Lovecraft could put together a horrific travelogue of distant, exotic locations. *At the Mountains of Madness*, with its restrained, scientific tone, takes the reader to an Antarctica that's surely more interesting (and lively) than the real thing. And in a story ghost-written for Harry Houdini, "Imprisoned with the Pharaohs," Lovecraft revels in the bizarre structures of ancient Egypt. Of course, the *real* travellers in Lovecraft's oeuvre are the Gods and their slaves who make the big trip to Earth to scare the bejeezus out of nosy Investigators.

Now Chaosium has released ***Masks of Nyarlathotep,*** a globe-spanning adventure that demonstrates just how pervasive the Cthulhoid evil is.

The boxed package is *large*. The familiar "What's in This Box?" sheet shows that this is no ordinary scenario pack. A four-page introduction outlines the whole "plot" of ***Masks***, and gives some planning hints to the Keeper. After reading the rest of the material, Keepers will surely return to these helpful pages. Then there are five booklets, called "chapters," each devoted to a locale that the Investigators might wish to visit — New York, London, Cairo, Kenya, and Shanghai. The research is thorough. Brief essays dot the chapter booklets, providing accurate period details on the city of Shanghai, the mean streets of London, and a brief history of modern Egypt. The booklets range from 16 to 32 pages, for a total of 140 pages of densely-packed information. As mentioned, this is one large adventure.

In theory, the five locations can be visited in any order, though logic and the needs of the scenario dictate a certain route. Still, the Investigator has "free will" to an extent not normally present in a ***Call of Cthulhu*** scenario.

The handouts are terrific. They include a business card printed on cardboard, a small matchbox (assembly required; matches not supplied), telegrams, letters, newspaper clips (backed with period articles and ads), and a snapshot. In fact, the handout booklet is so intriguing I started scrutinizing the *real* newspaper clips to see if they had anything to do with the scenario. (They don't . . . at least, I don't *think* so.)

You'll notice I've said nothing about the plot of ***Masks.*** Rest assured, I won't reveal too much of it here to ruin any prospective player's joy. But as I will be making some comments on it, Investigators may wish to skip what follows.

The plot is a fairly straightforward tale of the lost Carlyle expedition to Egypt and what they're really up to. Of course, Nyarlathotep, in his/her/its many guises, is involved. It's not saying too much to reveal that there will be an attempt to open the Great Gate, admitting a whole host of Mythos monsters bearing earthquakes, tidal waves, famine, and floods to this unfortunate planet.

The characters in the scenario are finely drawn and quite Lovecraftian. Roger Carlyle, the expedition leader, is under the spell of a beautiful Kikuyu girl, M'Weru, who guides Carlyle on behalf of Nyarlathotep. Hypatia Masters serves as the human incubator for Nyarlathotep's Spawn. Sir Aubrey Penhew, who also controls Carlyle, accumulates spells and prepares a big "blast" for the opening of the gate. Jack Brady, a potential ally for the Investigators, is a straight-talking, two-fisted fellow, just the sort to keep his cool while Investigators' minds begin snapping like rubber bands.

And snap they will. No ***Cthulhu*** scenario you have participated in before prepares you for the deadliness of ***Masks***. It is demanding and tough, yet never excessive. While a fiendish Keeper can throw cultists (from three different cults!) at Investigators, a more sensible referee will use them judiciously. There are some situations that are killers, including a deadly artist's garret in Soho and a grisly ceremony in M'Weru's cavern in Kenya. I would encourage players to keep a spare Investigator or two waiting in the wings.

My major problem with the scenario is its denouement. To prevent the Gate from opening seems, in most cases, to require the active involvement of an "assault force." In describing this "likeliest" scenario, the authors indicate that the force is essential to preventing Nyarlathotep's plans. In fact, the Investigators are encouraged to join one of the force's commando groups. The Investigators, as individuals, are decidedly less important here than in most ***Cthulhu*** scenarios; they can play key roles, but matters soon assume a much larger scale. (If this scenario were set in the current era, a call for the Rapid Deployment Force would not be out of place.)

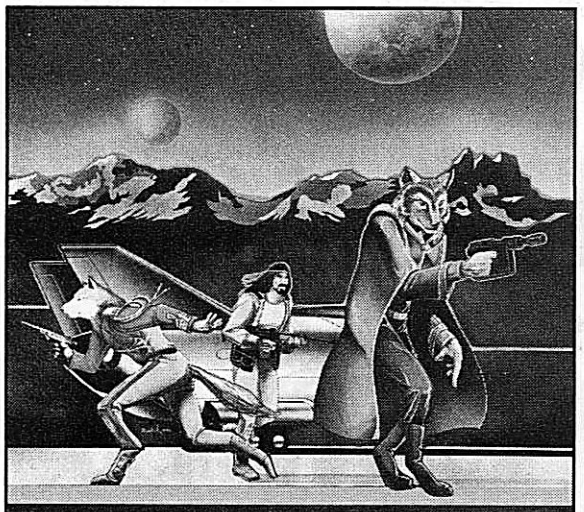
While loose ends ultimately get tied up, it seems difficult for Investigators to make all the right connections. Fortunately, each booklet lists how players can arrive there and where the trail leads to. There are red herrings and mistakes aplenty to be made. The tone of the book is flat and professorial, one that I find conducive to the creation of real horror. Yet there are few moments of true ghastliness in this scenario, especially when compared to a shorter scenario such as ***The Asylum***.

There is a definite adult quality to the text which includes references to male and female prostitution, as well as the ravings of a hashish addict. This isn't for kids, and I, for one, am glad of it.

The project is, in sum, massive and largely successful. Perhaps only TSR's *Dragonlance* series rivals it in size. And while some flavor may have escaped from this ghoulish stew, there's much here to delight Keepers, Investigators, and admirers of H.P. Lovecraft.

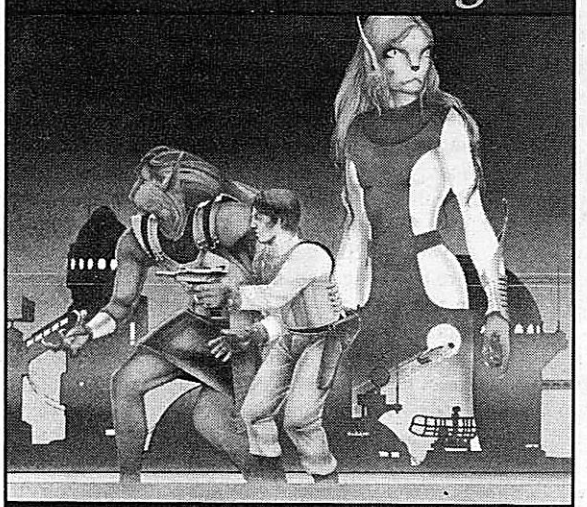
MASKS OF NYARLATHOTEP *(Chaosium); $16. Written by Larry DiTillio with Lynn Willis. Adventure for Call of Cthulhu. Six 8½" x 11" booklets (140 pages) and two sets of handouts, boxed. Published 1984.* □

Which Alien Is Dangerous?



Freebooting Encounter with the Wolves of Space

Vargr



Adventure and Intrigue with a Proud Warrior Race

Aslan

Encounters with the Enigmatic Centaurs

K'kree

The Aslan—a carnivore with a warrior culture?
The K'kree—a gregarious plant-eater?
The Vargr—a genetically engineered Terran wolf?

You've probably guessed this is a trick question, and you're right: the K'kree is the dangerous one. But why?

Vargr are unpredictable, easily offended. Don't insult a Vargr, his leader, or his species. But if you do get into a fight, the Vargr is smaller and weaker than you are; if you watch out for his teeth, you can probably beat him.

Aslan are trained fighters, deadly in combat. Their complicated code of honor is easy to transgress. But Aslan respect humans—they've lost too many wars not to. An Aslan will consider you honorable enough to challenge you to a duel, and Aslan duels are formal, ritualized, almost never fatal. You fight, you lose; you have a scratch, and the Aslan is satisfied.

K'kree are very big and powerful, and they always travel in groups. They don't like you: they can tell you're a meat-eater; they can smell it on your breath. They're also very arrogant and don't consider other races civilized. And K'kree in groups are very aggressive. An Aslan fight ends in a gesture of submission; a K'kree fight ends when the loser runs away. Running away is a good idea, if you can; better hope they don't chase you very far.

The point of this is that **Traveller** aliens are not easily described by a short tag or label. They're complex and unique—just like humans are. **Traveller** aliens are carefully worked out; they're full of surprises—but all the surprises make sense. Even the Vargr are much more than just wolves on two legs.

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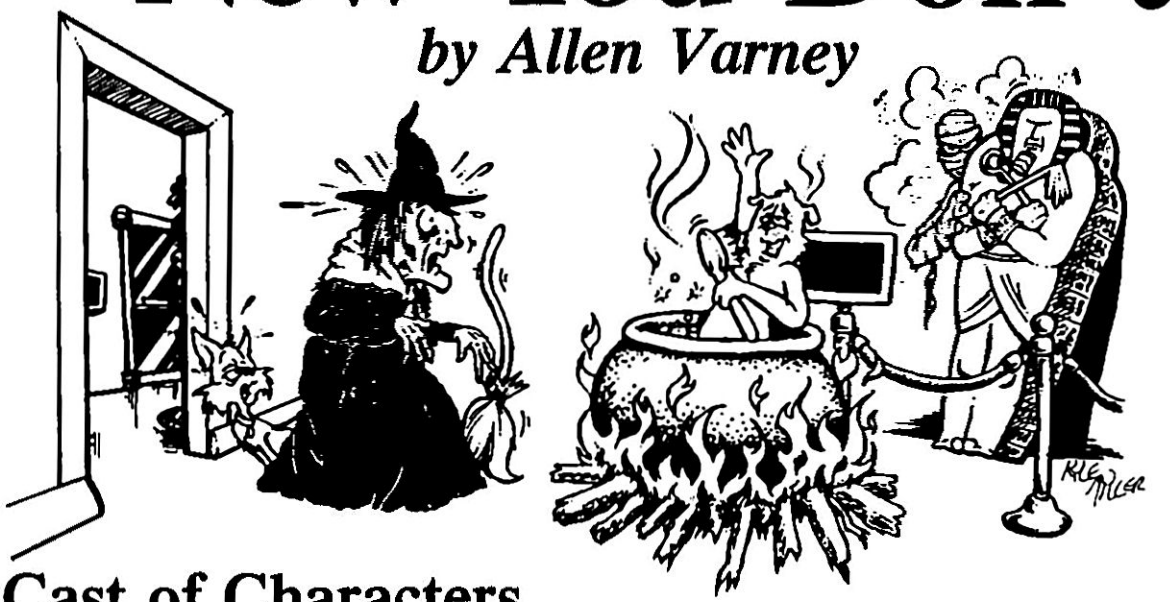
A *TOON* Short Subject:

Now Museum, Now You Don't

by Allen Varney



Cast of Characters

The Animator and any number of players. The Animator takes the roles of Matthew "Flatfoot" O'Rourke, a museum guard (seen earlier in the *TOON* Adventure *The Better Housetrap*); Grizelda Henbane, a rather dotty witch; Grizelda's companions, a broom and a cat familiar; an Egyptian mummy; and whatever other unlikely characters pop into the action.

Location

The Fenster J. Diddlebock Cultural Museum in The City. This is a small brick building with a couple of stone lions out in front. (The lions can come to life, scream, and run away if something frightening happens, but they shouldn't become more than a throwaway joke.) The Museum has four large rooms containing the exhibits described below. Each room is lit by a large skylight in the daytime. At night, when this adventure takes place, each room is lit by one dim bulb on one wall. The atmosphere in the Museum at night is eerie and frightening.

Situation

The characters are "Witchdusters," licensed investigators and exterminators of occult goings-on. Business has been bad lately, so they're relieved to be called in to investigate some puzzling happenings at the Museum: bizarre sounds, glimpses of strange creatures scuttling around corners, and the like. The events are believed to be related to the current exhibition at the Museum of rare magic and occult items. Late one night, after the Museum has closed, the characters go in to snoop around.

SECRET: The occult exhibit has attracted the notice of an old witch named Grizelda Henbane. She'll be the envy of the next Walpurgis Night party if she can only get some of the magic items in the Museum. She's going to break in — yes, tonight. As it turns out, the player characters happen to be just the vital ingredients she needs for her new Potion of Cringing Ugliness.

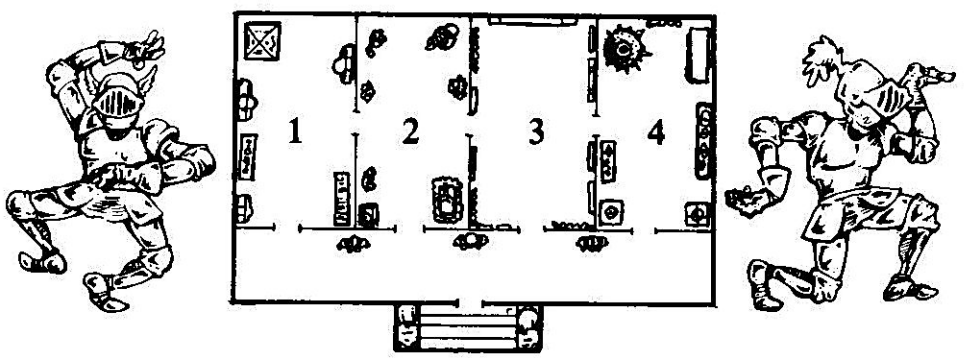
Object of the Adventure

Solve the mysterious trouble at the Museum and deal with Grizelda . . . somehow. Avoid being turned into Ugliness Potion.

The Plot

Late one dark and stormy night the characters are let into the Museum by the night watchman, Matthew "Flatfoot" O'Rourke. Use his character statistics from *The Better Housetrap* in *TOON*. Matthew is skeptical of the occult — "them durned super-national shenanigans" — so the players won't get much useful information out of him. After he lets the players in, he'll continue his rounds of the rooms.

The Museum has different exhibits in each of its four rooms. The rooms are arranged in a line, all connected by a long hallway running the length of the Museum. This hallway is where the characters have entered (unless someone has elected to crash through the roof or a wall); they can see two huge doorways to their left and two down the hall to their right. Each room is also connected to the ones on either side by big doorways.



In the hallway between each pair of room entrances is a medieval suit of armor. They're standing upright, empty. Any character can put a suit on; if the character is really small or large, just say the next suit down is equally small or large. If the characters don't wear the suits, use them to spook the players: Every time the characters turn around and look back at the suits, the armor has moved to some silly new position. But the suits will never attack the characters; they're shy. If the characters attack the suits, the armor will simply clatter to the ground. (Of course, if you want to have the suits Fight back, go ahead! Then their Fight Skill is 9.)

A Brief Tour

Room contents, reading from left to right:

1) *Egyptian room.* Lots of ancient Egyptian sarcophagi, scarabs, slabs of hieroglyphics, models of the Pyramids and the Sphinx, and so on. One closed sarcophagus has a genuine ancient mummy all wrapped in bandages.

2) *Statues.* Stone statues of Greek gods, headless women, horses, maybe a dragon, Samson, a Gorgon, other mythological creatures. Remember how scary these all can look in the dim light.

3) *Paintings.* All sorts of old masterpieces. Portraits of famous people like George Washington, the Mona Lisa, Nero with fiddle (and matches), Teddy Roosevelt and tiger, Gainsborough's *Blue Boy*, an Indian chieftain with headdress (this could turn out to be an eagle, or even sillier), the Charge of the Light Brigade, anything you want.

4) *Magic exhibition.* Here are lots of arcane items, ancient texts in unreadable scripts, voodoo dolls, talismans, amulets, flasks and wands and rings, and like that. The centerpiece of the exhibit is a genuine witch's cauldron, a huge iron pot in the center of the room with wood and kindling stacked beneath it.

Grizelda Henbane

Description: A wrinkled old snaggle-toothed witch with a pointy black hat, a dirty black gown, and a mean black heart.

Beliefs & Goals: Ugliness is beautiful. I love being evil. It's fun making people and animals into potions. Purloin any magic items I can find. Hypnotize things. Cackle.

Note: Grizelda can cast lightning bolts from her fingers (Fire Gun roll, 1 die of damage). She has supernaturally high resistance to Fast-Talk, higher than players ever get.

Hit Points: 11

Muscle: 3
- Break Down Door: 3
- Climb: 3
- Fight: 8
- Pick Up Heavy Thing: 4
- Throw: 5

Zip: 4
- Dodge: 8
- Drive Vehicle: 4
- Fire Gun: 7
- Jump: 4
- Ride: 9
- Run: 4
- Swim: 4

Smarts: 5
- Hide/Spot Hidden: 7
- Identify Dangerous Thing: 5
- Read: 5
- Resist Fast-Talk: 11 (!)
- See/Hear/Smell: 8
- Set/Disarm Trap: 5
- Track/Cover Tracks: 8

Chutzpah: 4
- Fast-Talk: 4
- Pass/Detect Shoddy Goods: 4
- Sleight of Hand: 8
- Sneak: 4

Shticks
- Bag (Hat) of Many Things: 8
- Hypnosis: 7

Graymalkin

Description: A kitten-sized gray kitten with fangs.

Beliefs & Goals: Protect Grizelda. Help her turn non-magic creatures into potions. I'm sure if I just keep Teleporting I'll eventually get it right.

Hit Points: 8

Muscle: 2
- Break Down Door: 2
- Climb: 8
- Fight: 6
- Pick Up Heavy Thing: NA
- Throw: NA

Zip: 6
- Dodge: 9
- Drive Vehicle: NA
- Fire Gun: NA
- Jump: 8
- Ride: 6
- Run: 9
- Swim: 6

Smarts: 2
- Hide/Spot Hidden: 7
- Identify Dangerous Thing: 2
- Read: NA
- Resist Fast-Talk: 3
- See/Hear/Smell: 8
- Set/Disarm Trap: NA
- Track/Cover Tracks: 2

Chutzpah: 2
- Fast-Talk: NA
- Pass/Detect Shoddy Goods: NA
- Sleight of Hand: NA
- Sneak: 5

Shticks
- Teleport: 2

You Woke Me Up!

After the characters have looked around awhile, the first mysterious event occurs. If they're in the Egyptian Room, they'll see a closed sarcophagus open, and out will climb a horrible dusty Egyptian mummy! If they're not in the Egyptian Room, they'll hear a piercing scream from Museum attendant Flatfoot O'Rourke; when they rush to his aid (he's in the Egyptian Room, of course), they'll find him Fallen Down in sheer fright, turned bone-white from head to toe — including clothing. (Now *that's* scared.) The closed coffin will now be open and empty; no sign of the mummy. Don't bother bringing back O'Rourke unless you need a handy NPC.

SECRET: The mummy, an ancient Egyptian Sphinx repairman named Ramahotep, will act menacing and try to frighten the characters. He's been brought to life by the magical influence of the cursed Hatsabad Diamond in the magic exhibit. He wants to go home to Egypt to repair the Sphinx, and he believes the characters are Babylonian invaders or demons who will try to stop him. Ramahotep can talk (in a voice like Boris Karloff), but he hasn't had a drink of water in 3000 years and his throat is very dry.

Ramahotep has attribute and skill levels of 5, and the Incredible Strength shtick at 8. He has 10 Hit Points.

Ramahotep will attempt to Sneak up on a single character and wrap him or her in bandages (make a Fight roll; the bandaged character is Boggled). If he fails to Sneak successfully, go to the next part of the Adventure.

Drop In for a Spell

With a crash and a hideous peal of laughter, Grizelda Henbane the witch breaks through the skylight of whatever room the characters are in. Whipping by on her broom too fast to be seen, she leaves all the characters spinning (and Boggled). When they come to their senses, they'll see her Flying around, in and out of the room, high above their heads. She sees them, does a double take, and cackles, "Why, you're (*fill in species or occupations of all player characters here*)! Just the ingredients I need for my new potion!" Give the players a chance to Run or Fight, then have Grizelda try to Hypnotize one or more of them. A Hypnotized character will think he or she is Graymalkin, the witch's cat familiar (see description). The character will have Graymalkin's Teleport shtick, at the same abysmally low level.

The real Graymalkin, a well-meaning kitty who loves to Teleport but never seems to end up *quite* where he intended, will attempt to herd, lead, or goad the characters into the magic exhibit rooms. (How he does it is up to the Animator,. but make him cute — and mischievous.) Anyone who makes a Fight roll against Graymalkin will spin around after flailing at empty air: Graymalkin Teleports out of the way and ends up somewhere nearby (probably in Grizelda's face).

Whenever the characters are getting the better of Grizelda, her broom will swoop under one or more characters, pick them up, and carry them on a wild ride through the Museum. (Make Ride rolls to stay on, or fall and take one die of damage). The broom can also slap a character in the rear (1 point of damage) or tickle with its bristles (victim is Boggled).

If the broom Falls Down, it will retreat to the Museum's broom closet. Thereafter, Grizelda will try to summon it but will keep getting something else from the closet: mops, whiskbrooms, etc.

Soon Grizelda will go into the magic exhibit and take the magic wand. By waving it she can make the statues and paintings in the Museum come to life! All statues or animated paintings have 6 Hit Points, attribute levels of 4, and skill levels of 7. Anyone who hits a stone statue takes 1 point of damage — it's like hitting a brick wall! The statues will try to pick up the characters (Fight rolls) and carry them to the iron cauldron, which Grizelda will try to magically fill with boiling water (poured from her Hat of Many Things). A character who fails a Smarts roll can bask in the water as though taking a warm bath; otherwise, the character takes one die of damage.

Any *Wizard of Oz* fan who spills water on the witch is in for a surprise: She doesn't melt, but absorbs the water like a sponge and grows to gigantic size! She'll remain at the larger size for as long as it's funny, then dry out and return to what passes for normal.

The Big Finish

The players will have to dispose of Grizelda somehow. They'll probably think of all kinds of ways to make her Fall Down, but if they need some help, have the exhibit include an ancient magical tome with instructions on how to dispel a witch. The accepted method involves a bell, a book, and a candle; this being a cartoon, loose equivalents can be substituted (doorbell, comic book, cigarette lighter). The idea is to ring the bell, light the candle, and read aloud from the book, thereby destroying the witch's magic — but this is *TOON*, so be ready for anything. ("I'm using the candle to ignite the book and heating the bell in its flames. Does it work?")

If the players manage somehow or other to follow through with this procedure, Grizelda Henbane will turn into a tiny little female version of Graymalkin. The erstwhile familiar will take one look at the erstwhile Grizelda, fall madly in love, chase her around the Museum, and both will Teleport away in a grand finale.

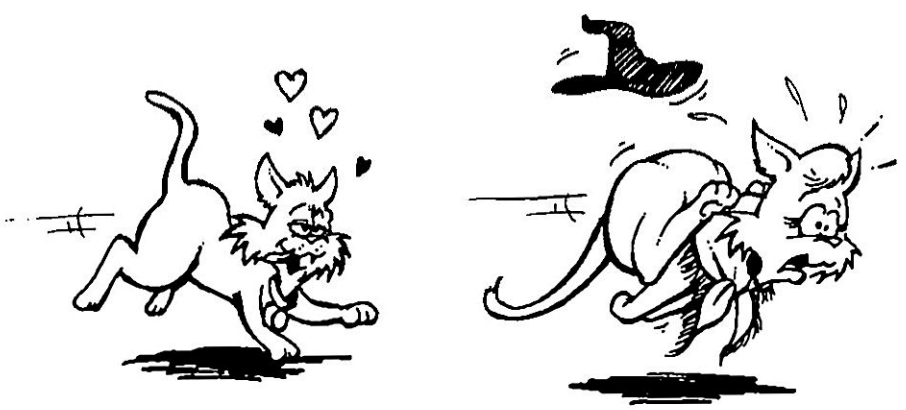
The intrepid "Witchdusters" may have figured out by now that the magical disturbances in the Museum are due to the items in the occult exhibit. If they don't dispose of these items in some inventive fashion, have all the animated statues and paintings sweep through, pick up all the items, and run off into a landscape painting by Gauguin, never to be seen again. Characters who want to follow will have to fail a Smarts roll to avoid realizing that this is impossible. If they follow, this could be the start of another adventure, as the characters journey through numerous art masterpieces.

Ramahotep the mummy could fall in love with Grizelda and run off after her in the cartoon's finale. More likely, he'll just stumble out onto the street, hail a cab, and go to Egypt.

The broom will fall in love with a feather-duster and live happily ever after.

Plot Points

A player who figures out how to dispose of Grizelda, the broom, or Graymalkin gets a Plot Point. A player who befriends Ramahotep and helps him get to Egypt gets a Plot Point. Each player who helps solve the mystery of the Museum happenings earns a Plot Point. As always, any player who disintegrates the Earth or the Moon loses a Plot Point. Finally, a player who makes a really obnoxious pun on "mummy," "witch," or "sarcophagus" may lose or gain a Plot Point at the Animator's discretion.



Grizelda's Broom

Description: A broom.
Beliefs & Goals: For a broom?
Hit Points: 7

The broom has the same attributes and skills as Grizelda, but instead of her shticks, it has the Flight shtick at 10.

The Magic Items

The exhibition of occult paraphernalia includes the following items, along with whatever else the Animator wants to put in:

Wand of Animation: Wave this wand and stone or painted figures come to life. Unfortunately, it can't reverse the effect. Good luck.

Crystal Ball: Gaze into this clear crystal sphere and see any of a variety of informative documentaries from public television. Topics include the sea urchin, Bantu tribesmen, waste disposal programs, Mary Baker Eddy, etc.

Ring of Invisibility: Put this ring on your finger and — that's right — it turns invisible. Handy, eh?

Potions: Growth, Shrinking, Invisibility, Dehydrated Water, Turn Blue, Turn Polka-Dot, Jekyll/Hyde Formula (from *TOON Strikes Again*), Change-into-Grizelda Potion, Beauty, Cringing Ugliness, whatever you want.

Mirror: Looks like an ordinary wall mirror. A sign underneath (make a Read roll) says the enchanted mirror will answer questions put to it. If a character asks the mirror a question, the Animator rolls one die. On a 1 or 2, the mirror answers the question truthfully. On a 3 or 4, it insults the character. On a 5 or 6, the character sees a variety of informative documentaries from public television.

The Hatsabad Diamond: This beautiful gem, displayed openly where anyone can take it, is actually *cursed*. When the owning character tries to do something to someone else, treat the victim as having the Incredible Luck shtick. The owning player's efforts will always backfire — *unless* the owner is trying to Fast-Talk someone else into taking the diamond. If you can't think of anything especially funny to do to the owner, drop a piano on him.

Useless Tables Redux

We were cleaning out the files awhile back and stumbled upon the entries for that long-ago contest, "Write a table for generating something useless" (*Space Gamer* 61). The response was excellent; longtime readers may recall the results reported in *Fantasy Gamer* 1 and *SG* 66 ("Arcturan Lasagna Ingredient Table," answers received when dialing wrong numbers, sack lunches). These two installments, though, did not plumb the depths of uselessness. Here are some more honorable mentions.

Hallucinogens in *Car Wars*

Jason Abbott of Santa Barbara, CA says, "Why anyone would want to use hallucinogens while in road combat (or at all) is beyond me." But should your autoduellist so indulge, roll one die twice for each second of combat and consult this handy chart to see what isn't there:

1,1) Rabbit in road, choose a random (D1 or greater) maneuver to miss it.
1,2) Tires fly off car, treat as D3 hazard to try and chase them down.
1,3) 15' rabbit appears in road, choose a D4+ maneuver to miss it.
1,4) Foam dice start talking, caught driver's attention so no further actions this round (go straight).
1,5) Hands grow into steering wheel, D3 hazard from shock.
1,6) Gas pedal swallows foot, D2 hazard and continue straight.
2,1) Opponent's car sprouts mushrooms, decelerate 30 mph to miss it.
2,2) Road sprouts mushrooms, decelerate 10 mph.
2,3) Brick wall appears, decelerate 30 mph to miss it.
2,4) Snow on road, D2 hazard.
2,5) Dashboard starts to breathe, do not fire this turn.
2,6) Trigger for weapon bites off finger, no firing this turn.
3,1) Hood starts to breathe, do not fire this turn.
3,2) 30' rabbit in road, shoot main weapons at it.
3,3) Bullet holes in car start to bleed, no effect.
3,4) 45' rabbit appears, choose a D3+ maneuver to hit it and shoot main weapons at it.
3,5) Body armor starts to shrink, D4 hazard.
3,6) Gunner (if any) turns into a werewolf, D5 hazard to search for wolfsbane.
4,1) Hand reaches up from the ground and rips out the car's axle. D2 hazard.
4,2) Car turns invisible, +2 to hit opponents.
4,3) Car wants its diaper changed, start to pull over.
4,4) Road fills up with robed monks, choose a D3+ maneuver to miss them.
4,5) Dashboard starts to melt away, go straight, no firing.
4,6) Notice a semi coming the other way, choose a D3 maneuver to miss it.
5,1) Car stalls on train tracks, accelerate.
5,2) 60' bird flies at windshield, D2 hazard.
5,3) Hear a tiger in the tank, no effect.
5,4) Radio spouts elevator music, D7 hazard.
5,5) Car is only ⅛ its original size, try to flee.
5,6) Worms crawl out of weapon nozzles, no firing.
6,1) Roll again, twice!
6,2-6) Nothing happens this second.

Random Polearm Generation

3) Ox Tongue
4) Bill
5) Bill Hook
6) Glaive
7) Guisarme
8) Voulge
9) Guisarme Voulge
10) Glaive Guisarme
11) Glaive Voulge
12) Guisarme Glaive
13) Voulge Guisarme
14) Voulge Glaive
15) Glaive Glaive
16) Glaive Guisarme Voulge
17) Voulge Glaive Guisarme
18) Glaive Glaive Glaive Guisarme Glaive

Jim Simons
Littleton, CO

Wizard's Library

The following chart can be used to determine the contents of a wizard's library. Roll a d18 five times to get the minimum number of books. Two d9s may be used at the GM's option.

1) *The Big Little Book of Magic*
2) *The Book of Punch-Out Golems*
3) *1001 Things a Boy Can Do with Human Skin*
4) *Fantasy Forest*™
5) *My Picture Book of Conjured Monsters*
6) *The "I Hate to Spell" Spell Book*
7) *Janes' Book of Monsters*
8) *Dick's Book of Demons*
9) *Spot's Book of Spirits*
10) *Understanding Traveller*
11) *Now We Are Tree: A Druidical Primer*
12) *The Big Book of Giants*
13) *The Little Book of Leprechauns*
14) *Papers and Paychecks*
15) *The Chaotic Evil Coloring Book*
16) *Naked Elf Women and How to Find Them*
17) *Plane Truth*, the Magazine of the Astrally Alert
18) *The D-18 Dice Chart: Theory and Application*

Worcester War Gamers' Collective
Worcester, MA

Zombie Reaction Generator

1) Blank stare
2) Fixed stare
3) Cold stare
4) Emotionless stare

Darrell L. Byford
Allen, TX

Giant vs. Human Arm-Wrestling Results

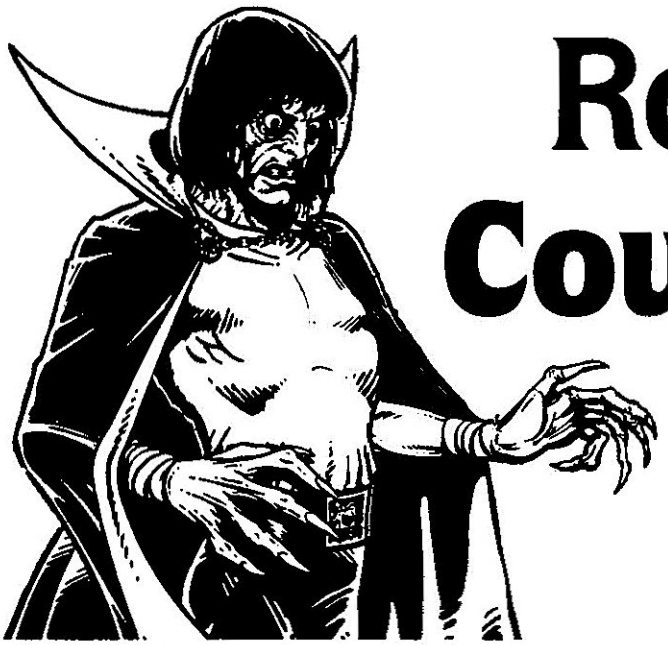
1) Giant wins; human's knuckles broken
2) Giant wins; human's fingers broken
3) Giant wins; human's arm broken
4) Giant wins; human's hand ripped off
5) Giant wins; human's arm ripped off
6) Human wins; *both* human's arms ripped off (Giants are *terribly* sore losers)

Darrell L. Byford again

Table Left Unnamed At Insistence of Our Attorneys

1) Terribly Silly Rules
2) Trademark Symbol Required
3) They Sue Regularly
4) Their Subscriptions Revoked
5) Tough S***, Readers
6) Total Staff Resignation

The Prince of Darkness



Roleplaying Count Dracula

by W. Peter Miller

The cloaked figure enters your room. You turn to face him. When his eyes meet yours the strangest thing happens. You feel like this stranger with the wild hair and elongated teeth is a friend. He makes his way over to you and in the last moments of your life you realize you were wrong. He's not your friend, he's your worst nightmare. He's Dracula, the Prince of Darkness.

Nearly everyone has seen a movie or read a book about Count Dracula. But how does one go about putting all of the data (often conflicting) about this mythical one-man horror show into a concrete gameable form?

This article outlines a set of powers, abilities, and weaknesses that Dracula would have in any game system. A second section gives tips on slowly integrating Dracula into your campaign, to catch your players off-guard. The last part covers Dracula's stats in several popular game systems.

Let me warn you that it's not my intent to recreate Bram Stoker's vampire. There are too many other sources of lore to pick just one (even the "original") to base Dracula on. With that taken care of, let us begin.

The Powers of Dracula

Transformation: Dracula has the ability to change his body into several different forms. He can become a bat, a wolf, or mist. In his bat or wolf forms he takes on the attributes of a powerful member of that animal type. In his mist form Dracula can slip through the smallest crack under a door or window frame. While in these forms the vampire cannot use any of his other powers. He can change back and forth among any of these forms at will.

Mind Control: Dracula has the ability to compel people to look into his dark eyes. Once he has their gaze, Dracula can exert a mesmerizing power that forces people to obey his every command. There should always be some chance for the character to break this stare. One method would be for the character to make a saving throw against his or her will power. Dracula can also command any lesser vampire he comes in contact with.

Animal Control: Dracula can summon and control some of the creatures of the night, most often bats, rats, and wolves. The amount of time for any of these creatures to appear as well as their number will largely be a function of where they are being summoned from. Surely rats would arrive almost anywhere within two minutes, but bats could take longer and wolves might never arrive. Use common sense.

Climbing: Dracula can cling to the sheerest surface, climbing it effortlessly and at the speed he could travel the same distance on the ground.

Regeneration: This power allows Dracula to recover 75% of his hit points every turn. Dracula must do this while he is in human form and he may not use any other powers while he is regenerating. In addition, he cannot make any special attacks while regenerating.

Gliding: While in human form, Dracula can use his cape to glide short distances. If conditions are good, he can gain altitude and glide along the wind currents at speeds of up to 35 mph.

Skills

Stealth: Dracula has a 75% chance of successfully using shadows and cover to hide his presence.

Streetwise: With a good knowledge of the ways of the street and of the criminal subculture, Dracula has a 77% chance of correctly deducing something about, or gaining knowledge from, the street.

Special Attacks

Claws: In especially monstrous campaigns, Dracula can have claw-like fingernails that do about the same amount of damage as the average rifle. Dracula will hit with his claws as he would with a punch.

Fangs: Dracula's infamous fangs are mostly used to tear open the necks of his victims so he can drink their blood. The fangs do the same amount of damage as the average pistol. Dracula sinks his fangs successfully 65% of the time. It will take about two minutes to drain the victim's blood.

Dracula's Weaknesses

Compared to most literary bad guys, Dracula has a huge number of weaknesses. For instance:

Religious Items: Vampires will actually take damage when they come in contact with religious symbols and items. These items may be strictly Christian, but a more interesting (and less discriminatory) practice would allow items from any religion to be used against vampires — as long as the bearer truly believes in the religion. The more unshakable the user's belief, the more damage Dracula and his kind will take from contact with the item. This damage manifests itself as a burning of the skin. The amount of damage is usually enough to drive a vampire away, but not enough to kill it. Items included in this category are medallions, crosses, Jewish stars, holy water, etc.

Garlic: The legends say that garlic will drive Dracula away. This may or may not be true, as the referee decides. If it is true, a vampire will not come within ten feet of garlic. It would also be possible to drape garlands of the stuff over a vampire's coffin to trap it within.

Image: A vampire will not reflect an image in a mirror or other reflective surface. Its

image will also fade from photographs, movie film, videotape, or any other recording medium after 24 hours. A voice recording will also fade after a day. You might think of this as an advantage, until you consider how easily this would reveal a vampire's unnatural presence.

Blood: Without their craving for blood, vampires just wouldn't be vampires. Dracula and his minions need to drink the blood from one person every night or they will go into a comatose state. They will not awaken from this sleep until enough time has passed for their bodies to have healed without the regenerating power. When they awaken from this sleep they must consume blood within 24 hours or they will die. The amount of damage taken each day without blood is equal to 15% of the hit point total. Dracula, as well as other "natural" vampires, will be able to survive longer without drinking blood than the humans they turn into vampires. These recently-created undead beings are weaker than those of the true vampire race.

Sunlight: If Dracula is exposed to direct rays of sunlight for 30 seconds he will disintegrate into a fine, gray powder. If the sunlight is indirect or reflected Dracula will take 10% of his hit point total every 30 seconds. This damage cannot be healed using the regenerating power. Recently-created vampires tolerate sunlight much better. They fear and shun direct sunlight, but can tolerate indirect and reflected light from the sun. They will take damage after longer exposure, however.

Permission: A vampire must be given an invitation to enter a private dwelling for the first time. Once permission to enter has been given, the vampire is free to return at any time. Of course, Dracula may use his mind control power to get this invitation.

Sleep: Dracula, or any other vampire, must sleep in a very small enclosure with some soil from its native land. Dracula will keep his Transylvanian soil in an ornate, plushly-lined coffin. If a vampire cannot get to its coffin, or it has been stolen by the heroes, it will not be able to sleep until it gets a replacement.

Death: It *is* possible to kill a vampire. The easiest method is to pound a hardwood stake through the vampire's heart and cut off its head. This will cause the vampire to turn to dust. The dust should then be scattered . . . at sea, to be most effective.

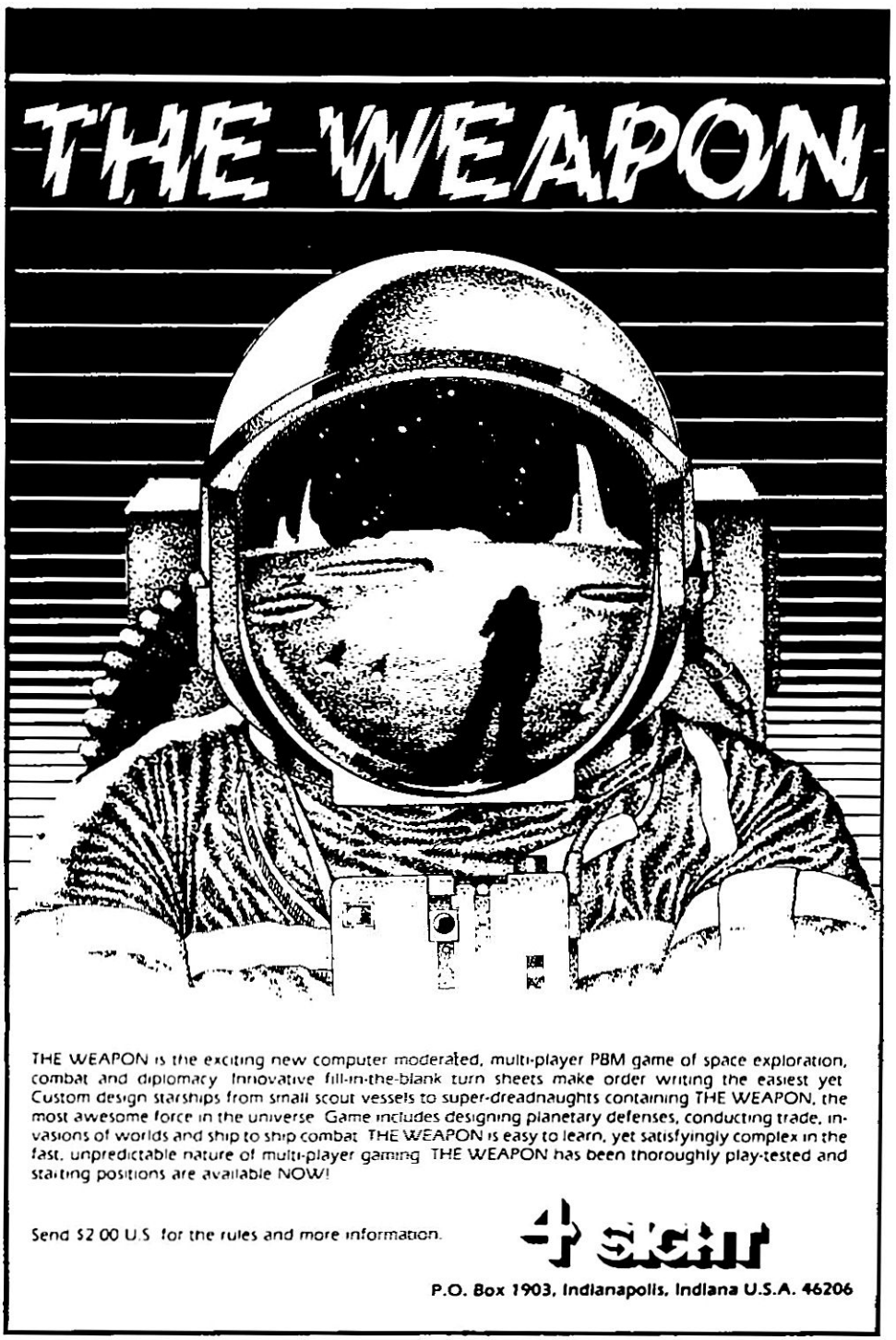
Dracula in the Campaign

The most important thing to remember when introducing Dracula into your campaign is subtlety. The evidence that leads the players to believe that vampires are afoot should be introduced slowly, ideally overlapping with a current adventure. One way to do this is with small clues that won't mean anything until the players realize what is happening. Then they should say, "Oh . . . why didn't we realize this was happening?" The most efficient way to go about doing this is by mentioning something that the character heard on the news, read in the paper, or heard from the local gossip. This story should be something like, "Dog found mutilated — throat slashed," or "Woman found dead in apartment. Early report is that she froze to death."

Once some early clues are established and the current adventure concludes it is time to get more bold with the clues given. Maybe the body of the lady who was "frozen to death" turns out to be missing from the morgue. And if the cause of death is investigated, it is discovered that she did not freeze to death — she died from loss of blood. Or, maybe some more dogs are dead or missing. Be grisly in your descriptions. Dracula is not a nice guy; at times he may be charming, but he is not nice.

Dracula is interested in two things: turning all the Earth's people into vampires, and finding a bride. If a person is bitten by a vampire and has more than 50% of his or her hit points taken by the vampire, then he or she will die — and rise from the grave two days later as a vampire. Dracula can choose a public figure (a rich heiress, for example) or one of the player-characters to be his bride. This is a good method for getting the characters involved. These clues should eventually lead them to Dracula.

After a while, there will be people missing from all over the city and corpses will be dropping out of sight like flies. By this time, the players should have a pretty good idea about what is happening. Dracula may try to confront them singly, in the dark of night, when their guards are down . . . □



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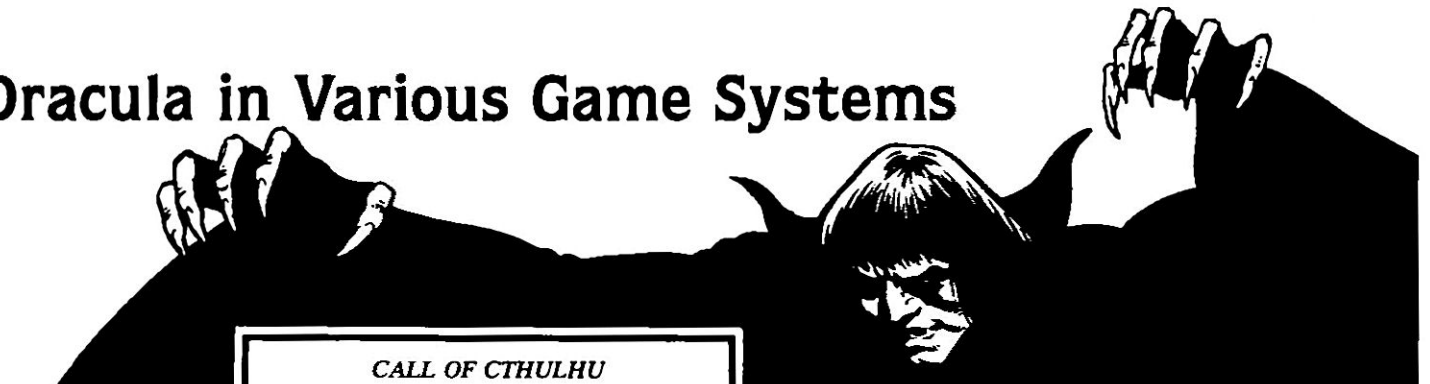
Dracula in Various Game Systems



CALL OF CTHULHU

STR 40	CON 35	SIZ 13	INT 30
POW 21	DEX 23	CHA 17	SAN 20
EDU 16	HP 24		

Weapon	Attk%	Damage
Claw	50%	2d6+3
Fangs	65%	1d8+2*

*This damage is taken from a victim's POW. When the victim reaches 0 POW, he or she will "die," rising from the dead as a vampire. At this point, POW will rise 1 point a week up to its maximum level.

Skills: Hide 75%; Move Quietly 75%; Read/Write Hungarian 90%; Speak Hungarian 95%; Occult 40%; Streetwise 77%.

Spells: None

SAN: Seeing Dracula will cost the viewer 1d8 of SAN unless a SAN roll is made. Even then, one SAN point is lost.

Special Note: All vampire powers come naturally to Dracula and other vampires. They are not spells and they cannot be learned.

TRAVELLER

STR 20	DEX 14	END 16	INT 14
EDU 12	SOC 14		

Streetwise-3 and special Vampire Skills and abilities.

Weapon	Damage
Fangs	3d6−3*
Claws	3d6

*Apply this damage to END only. When END reaches 0 the victim dies, only to rise again as a vampire.

THE FANTASY TRIP

ST 30 DX 19 (adjDX 18) IQ 20

Weapon	Damage
Fangs	1d6+2
Claws	3d6+3

Talents: Sex Appeal, Literacy, Charisma, Silent Movement, Streetwise, Hungarian, English.

Spells: None. The Vampire Powers come naturally to all vampires. They can't be learned.

CHAMPIONS

VAL	CHA	Cost			
25	STR	15			
30	DEX	60	5	SPD	10
20	CON	20	20	REC	18
20	BODY	20	80	END	20
25	INT	15	50	STUN	7
30	EGO	40	OCV: 10		
75	PRE	65	DCV: 10		
14	COM	2	ECV: 10		
10	PD	5	PHA: 3, 5, 7, 10, 12		
10	ED	6			

	Cost	Powers and Skills
		Elemental Control
43*	65	Turn to mist (65 pts. Desolid — seen as mist)
21*	32	Turn to bat (40 pts. Shrinking and 25 pts. Flight)
21*	32	Turn to wolf (20 pts. Running and 45 pts. HKA)
100*	150	Mind Control
10*	15	HKA Fangs 1d6
7*	10	Clinging
100*	150	Regeneration
13*	20	Gliding
	5	Stealth (15−)
	3	Streetwise (15−)

*Usable only in darkness, +½

Disadvantages: 100 +

40	Susceptibility to religious items (3d6 − 10d6 AP, common)
10	Susceptibility to garlic (2d6, uncommon)
25	Susceptibility to sunlight (7d6 AP, very common) (x½)
30	Dependence on blood. Must drink the blood of one person a night.
25	Psychological Limitation: Cannot sleep unless in an enclosed space with a quantity of native soil.
25	Psychological Limitation: Will not enter a private dwelling without permission.
250	Vulnerable to hardwood stakes driven through heart (50x damage, uncommon)
101	Villain bonus

293 (CHA Cost) + 323 (Power Cost) = (Total Cost) 616 = Disadvantage Total

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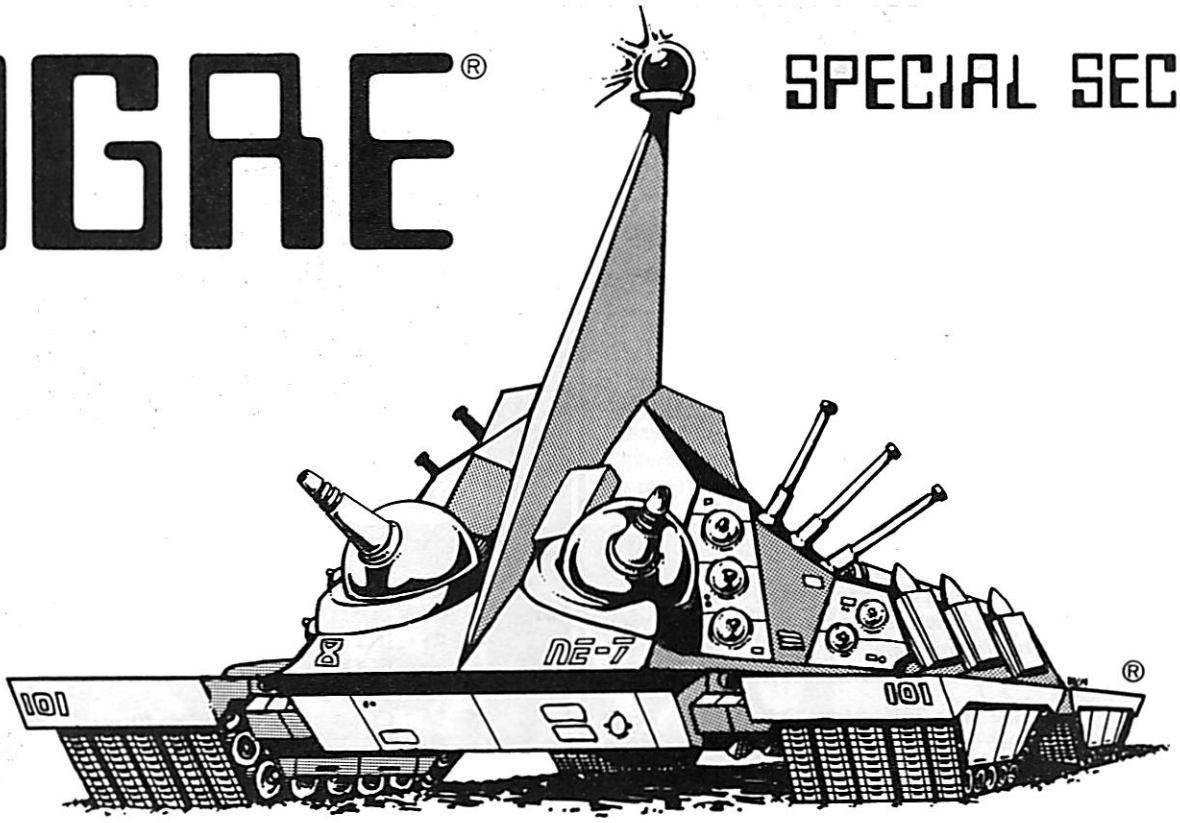


OPERATION NEWSPAPER

A SHOCKWAVE SCENARIO

BY STEVE JACKSON

The briefing room was noisy, as was to be expected from any room full of hover jockeys. But when the door opened, the rowdiness died down to a buzz. Not that this crew was especially respectful of authority . . . they weren't. But they were full of questions, and it looked as though today they would get some answers.

The room lights dimmed, and an unfamiliar colonel — Intelligence, by the brassard — stepped to the lectern. "I'm sure you have all been wondering why we pulled you stateside for a month of training on Paneuropean equipment," he began. Stating the obvious, of course, like any briefing officer. Then the bombshell came. "You're going to be using that equipment on the 20th of this month, for a raid on Emden."

Suddenly everyone was talking at once. The colonel calmly waited for the furor to die down. "No, gentlemen. I assure you, we are perfectly well aware that the Emden complex is a considerable distance from the front. We're going to put you in there right under the Micks' noses, and we're going to get you out again. And, in the meantime, you're going to kick some ass . . ."

Operation Newspaper is a ***Shockwave*** scenario representing a raid and reconnaissance mission on a Paneuropean rear area. Sixteen Combine pilots, using captured Paneuropean equipment, are covertly inserted in a small port facility near Emden. Their mission: recon the area, create as much trouble as possible, and get out again.

Map: Use both the ***Shockwave*** and ***G.E.V.*** maps, with the ***G.E.V.*** map set up to the east.

Setup: The Paneuropean player (white) sets up first. He gets the following forces:

Two laser towers, two 20 SP lasers, and *all* the other white building counters supplied with the ***Shockwave*** set (i.e., a total of 19 buildings, counting the lasers and laser towers). These counters are set up anywhere on either map, with the following restrictions: (a) no more than one building may be located in any vertical row of hexes; (b) no building may be within 6 hexes of any other building. Buildings *may* be set up in water hexes; such buildings are assumed to be on islands or pilings, and not underwater.

One 3-1 infantry unit in each of the following hexes: S-0215, S-0710, 0404, 2203.

One 3-1 marine unit in each of the following hexes: S-2315, S-0307.

Five trucks in each of the following hexes: S-1515, S-1615.

Two hovertrucks in each of the following hexes: S-1210, S-1310, S-1409, 1611.

Two Heavy Tanks in S-2304.

One GEV in each of the following hexes: 0416, 1513, S-1907.

One LGEV in each of the following hexes: S-1120, S-2105, 1611.

All building counters are set up upside down except for the two laser towers. All other units are right-side-up.

The Paneuropean player will also receive reinforcements as listed below.

The Combine (black) player may study the setup after the Paneuropean player has placed all buildings and units. He may then pick *any six* building counters and expose them (these are the installations already known to Combine intelligence). Finally, he places his force — 16 LGEVs — on *one* of the following three hexes: 0413, 2113, or S-0313, and secretly writes down which map (***Shockwave*** or ***G.E.V.***) he will escape from. The Combine player moves first, obeying stacking limits after his first move.

Captain Griffith shook his head heavily. As his eyes cleared and he took in his surroundings, he grinned. "We made it, didn't we?" The small man in gray, bending over him with a syringe, nodded. "Yes, Captain. You made it. Now, if you will help me with the other men . . ." Twenty minutes later, the whole team was awake. Griffith shook his head in amazement. Everything was going right, for once. The hibernation drug was better than 95% effective, but he'd been sure he'd lose at least one man.

The sixteen hovercraft pilots, and the one small spy, were alone in a cavernous warehouse. All about them were the shadowy bulks of huge shipping containers. One was open; the pilots had ridden to Emden in it. As they watched, the agent used an electronic key to unseal two others. "Here are your machines, gentlemen. Let's get them checked out."

As they worked, one of the other pilots waved a hand at Griffith. "Sir? Did they tell you how they did this? I mean . . ." He waved his hand at the warehouse.

"Just what they told all of us, Bob," came the reply. "Our boys captured the container ship, threw three cases of tractor parts overboard, and put us on instead. If you want the details, you can talk to CIS." The pilots looked expectantly at the man in gray, but he smiled and shook his head.

"Well, if they could send us in like that, why not just make it simple and smuggle in one great big bloody fusion bomb?" The speaker hadn't really expected an answer to that, but he got one. "Because, son, if we vaporized Emden, they'd just write it off, switch over to Ilyagrad and Prague, and keep right on going. But if we knock everything down, but leave it fixable, they will fix it. It'll take them two years, and they'll be soft that whole time. We really do more damage this way — and we make points for 'restraint' with the neutrals."

Beginning play. After exposing 6 building counters (plus the two laser towers that started the game exposed), the Combine player picks his entry hex and escape map, and takes his first move. The Paneuropean player may not move until he has been "alerted," as described below.

The warehouse door groaned open and the little hovercraft slid out into the darkness. Griffith's earphone buzzed. "Red Leader, this is Red Three."

"Go ahead, Red Three."

"I forgot to ask. Why did they call this 'Operation Newspaper'?"

"It's from something a fellow said a couple hundred years ago. A publisher. He said, 'The purpose of a newspaper is to report the news and raise hell.'"

"Huh?"

"That's what we're going to be doing, Howie. Reporting the news . . . and raising hell."

Paneuropean alert. Since the Combine units' insertion was accomplished by stealth, Paneuropean units may not act until they are alerted. Alert takes place automatically if Combine units (a) enter any building hex; (b) make any attack; (c) pass within two hexes of any Paneuropean armor unit; (d) pass within one hex of any Paneuropean infantry or marine unit.

Whenever a Combine LGEV passes within 3 hexes of any building, the Paneuropean player rolls 2 dice. On a roll of 11 or 12, the intruding LGEVs were recognized as intruders and an alert has been sounded. Roll at the end of the Combine turn; roll once for each building approached, regardless of how many LGEVs pass nearby, or when (in the turn) the LGEVs passed within 3 hexes.

When an alert occurs, all Paneuropean units can move and attack immediately. Any Paneuropean attacks made on the first turn after alert are at a disadvantage; subtract 1 from the die roll. Note that if any Paneuropean units are the targets of overrun attacks, they will be alerted by the attack and will fire first — but still at a −1 to the die roll.

Until the Paneuropean units are alerted, they do not move at all; the Combine player just takes one turn after another.

The raiders spread out over the countryside. Reports came in: an office complex here, a laser there, a nuclear reactor over there, a truck convoy poking along the road somewhere else. It was less than ten minutes before Griffith thought he had the picture. "Red Leader to all units; we start shooting in four minutes. Here are your sectors and first targets . . ."

Four minutes later, Red Team was cruising along a hillside overlooking a brand-new nuclear reactor complex. The countdown reached zero. Guns firing, Red Team hot-dogged down the hill toward their first target. Shortly thereafter, the lights went out.

Building Identification. One of the Combine raiders' chief objectives is to identify buildings (and to destroy them, if possible). As per ***Shockwave*** section 5.06, a building is automatically identified if a Combine unit approaches within 3 hexes. Once the building is identified, turn it right-side-up. Remember to roll for alerting, if the Paneuropean forces are not yet alert.

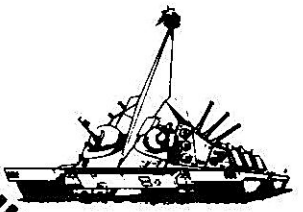
Once he has been alerted, the Paneuropean player may attack with his lasers and laser towers. When a laser attacks, it is automatically identified and turned right-side-up.

"Blue Leader to all units. We just made ID on the target at S-2011, the hard way. It's a laser, and it's active."

"Red Leader to all Green units; it's your target. Take it out. Red Leader to Blue Leader — any casualties for you? You look OK on my screen."

"Blue Leader to Red Leader. We're OK. Bailey got scorched, but they quit tracking him to go after Vail, and I think he'll be moving again before . . ."

"Green Two to all units. Laser at S-2011 neutralized."



Reinforcements. Once the Paneuropeans have been alerted, they get reinforcing units according to the following table. The Paneuropean player rolls two dice at the beginning of each of his turns and gets the resulting unit(s) as reinforcements.

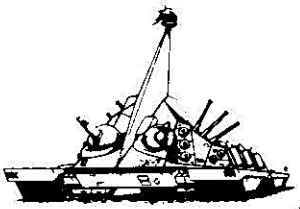
2	Superheavy Tank
3, 4	Heavy Tank
5	Missile Tank
6	Two light tanks (together)
7	3-1 infantry unit
8	LGEV
9	GEV
10	GEV-PC carrying 3-1 infantry unit
11	3-1 marine unit
12	Two light tanks (together)

The reinforcing units appear on the map according to the following table (roll 2 dice):

2, 3	S-0401 (on road)
4	S-1801 (on road)
5	0401 (on road)
6	2304 (on road)
7	2315 (on road)
8	1822 (on road)
9	0422 (on road)
10	S-1822 (on road)
11, 12	S-0422 (on road)

The entry hex of a reinforcing unit counts as its first hex of movement; reinforcing units are eligible for the road movement bonus on their first turn. If the road is cut, blocked by rubble, or occupied by an enemy unit, reinforcing units may enter on another hex, as close as possible to the designated one, but do not get the road bonus. The Paneuropean player may decline any reinforcement that he does not want, but may not delay it until a later turn.

Destruction of reactors. There are two Paneuropean reactors on the map. Their destruction will cause fluctuations in the local power net, temporarily damaging the defenders' ability to communicate with local CPs and therefore to target enemy units. (Since this is a rear area, the system is not as multiply-redundant as it should be.) If one reactor is destroyed, the Paneuropean player must subtract 1 from each attack roll he makes for the next 3 turns. If the second reactor is destroyed, the Paneuropean player must subtract 1 from each attack roll he makes for the next 5 turns. If these time periods overlap, the 5-turn period starts *as soon as* the second reactor is destroyed.



Escape. The game ends when all surviving Combine units have escaped. To escape, a Combine unit must leave the map on one of the water hexes, S-0106 through S-0114, *or* 2306 through 2314. From there, they can reach the ocean for pickup.

Before the game starts, the Combine player must designate which map he will escape from; the hexes on the other map are considered part of a lake, and are *not* valid escape hexes. This does not represent any Paneuropean uncertainty as to the location of the ocean, but rather the shock value of the sudden attack — the defenders aren't sure *what* is going on, or what the real tactical picture is.

Some Paneuropean units (i.e., trucks) may wish to escape to avoid destruction by the raiders. They may escape by leaving the north or south edge of either map; the raiders won't follow them that far.

The seven remaining hovercraft buzzed toward the harbor. Griffith studied his screen. Nothing ahead but some infantry in the buildings — and those could be evaded. He activated his mike and gave orders. But, even as he did, the screen image changed. Some of those infantry units were moving east, into the water. That meant one of two things. Either their commander was crazy, or those troops were marines.

Winning the game. Only the Combine player accrues victory points in this scenario. He scores as follows:

40 for each strongpoint destroyed

40 for each reactor destroyed

25 for each admin building destroyed

20 for each laser or laser tower destroyed

10 for each 1-hex ("river") bridge destroyed, including RR bridges

5 for each small bridge destroyed, including RR bridges

3 for each truck or hovertruck destroyed

1 for each point of fire directed into a town hex by either side. (Each point of fire does one point of damage to a town hex. 12 points of damage turn the town to rubble, and no further damage can be done. For overrun combats, count each unit participating in the combat, regardless of type, as doing 1 point of damage to the town.)

Standard victory points for each enemy combat unit destroyed

If some of the LGEVs escape, the Combine player scores further victory points as follows:

20 for each LGEV that escapes. However, no more than half the Combine's VP total can be from escaped LGEVs, to prevent the Paneuropean player from firing a few token shots and then withdrawing his whole force.

10 for each building identified (regardless of whether or not it was destroyed). The 8 buildings identified at the start of play do not count. No identification counts for points unless at least one LGEV escapes after that ID is made . . . somebody has to carry the word back!

This scenario requires more victory point "bookkeeping" than most *Ogre/G.E.V.* games. Players are advised to set up a sheet of scratch paper at the beginning of the game, and to use the BRIDGE OUT and RUBBLE counters from ***Shockwave.***

Victory levels. The degree of success of the Combine mission is determined as follows:

Less than 125 points: Total failure. Mission planners will be demoted in rank or court-martialed.

125-250 points: Poor results. Mission planners are not likely to be promoted again.

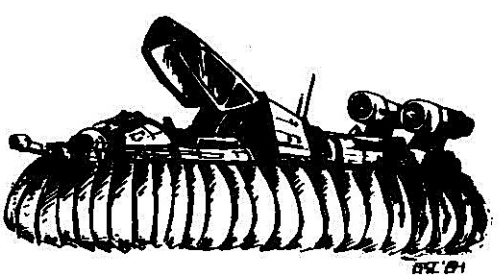
251-500 points: Routine results, barely justifying the expenditure for the mission.

501-750 points: A successful mission, well worth the expenditure of men and material. Commendations all around.

Over 750 points: A smashing success. Mission planners will be promoted. Surviving raiders will be promoted and decorated.

Solitaire play. This is a good solitaire scenario. The player sets up the buildings upside-down and randomly, except for the laser towers and lasers. These four units start right-side-up, and the player turns 4 more buildings over at random. Since the player is thus prevented from strategically locating the buildings for a good defense, and from attacking the LGEVs with laser fire before lasers are identified, adjust all VP requirements by 50 points in the defender's favor.

Optional rule: suitcase nuke. The attacker may take one "suitcase" nuclear charge. This is carried by one LGEV; designate that unit by stacking the "missile" counter underneath. The LGEV carrying the nuke has a movement of only 3/1 until it drops the nuke (which it may do at any time). Once the nuke is dropped, it may not be recovered, and enemy forces may not interfere with it (they don't know it's there). The Combine player may set off the nuke at any time; its effects are exactly the same as those of a Cruise Missile in ***Shockwave.***



Note that the nuke is a good tool for destroying town hexes. An "X" result on a town turns it to rubble; a "D" result has (for game purposes) no effect. Because of the power and expense of the nuke, adjust all VP requirements by 150 points in the defender's favor.

The darkened streets roared with the passage of Griffith and his men. Fire jumped from a building ahead of them. One of the oncoming buggies slewed and recovered. Return fire demolished the building and its unlucky occupants. Then they were at the harbor. The machines jinked and slewed, seeking a smooth transition from land to water. They found it. Then the surface of the water, ahead of them, lit up.

"Hit them together, boys! Follow me!" The other hovercraft followed the leader, adopting an arrow formation, charging toward the line of waiting marines, rocking on the water in their battlesuits. Then contact — and everything was chaos. The ocean boiled with men and explosions. The LGEV to Griffith's right vanished in a fireball; the one behind it ran into a swell and broke up. A Mick trooper broke from the water right in front of him, swooping low like a jet-assisted dolphin. Then, as Griffith's gun tracked him, the trooper simply fell apart — more like a machine than a man. A hoarse scream came over the radio; Griffith couldn't tell who it was, but a light on his board went out as the screaming stopped.

Then it was over. Four tiny GEVs sped across the water toward a North Sea rendezvous. Behind them, Emden was burning.

SCENARIO NOTES

This scenario was conceived as a "showcase" for the new LGEV unit. It's cheap and fast-moving, but not too hard-hitting . . . and it cannot stand up to a firefight! The only tactics that will work for an all-LGEV force are hit-and-run. The farther into the game you get, the less time the LGEVs will have to "hit," and the more they'll need to run!

The attacker can bring off a substantial victory by patient, cowardly tactics. Don't fight unless it's necessary — but don't miss a chance to destroy enemy units before they can hit you. With a unit as weak as the LGEV, instituting an overrun is purely a desperation tactic. Unless, of course, the enemy can't shoot back. A single LGEV can raze almost any building in a single turn, just by making one overrun after another. Each movement point spent in overrunning is worth 1 attack strength x 4 overrun multiplier x 2 fire rounds = 8 structure points of damage — for each LGEV. That's a lot of damage — but then, four minutes is a long time when you're firing tacnukes at a large, helpless target!

The defender is at a disadvantage until he can get organized and pull some sort of force together. Protect the buildings — especially the laser towers — but your first priority is organization! Don't ignore reinforcements just because they seem badly placed. Between the speed of the LGEVs and your own uncertainty about their objectives, no unit on the map is guaranteed worthless until the game is over.

Game balance. The easiest way to change the balance, if you find that one side wins consistently, is to change the number of lasers the Paneuropeans have. Even one laser makes a big difference. For a smaller change, let the Paneuropean lasers be 30 or 40 SP instead of 20.

Variation. Try the same thing with 8 regular GEVs instead of 16 LGEVs. The GEVs are tougher, but they can't be in as many places at once! And attrition from lasers is more damaging when you start with only half the number of units. □

AN OGRE-NECROMANCER VARIANT

BADLANDS

BY

STEVE CREEDE ALLEN JACKSON LAMBARD VARNEY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This is a variant of *Ogre* played on a *Necromancer* map. The uneven terrain is considered to be a badlands, with the darkest-colored areas representing the lowest elevations and the lightest ones the highest. The thick lines on the map represent cliffs or steep slopes, differences in elevation of about 20 meters. Slope hexes are breaks in the cliffsides. The black outcroppings are deep craters which cannot be entered.

2.0 MOVEMENT

2.1 Infantry. Infantry units can move "downhill" to a lower elevation without penalty, but crossing an elevation line "uphill" costs 2 MP. Infantry units treat slope hexes as clear terrain.

2.2 Armor units, hovercraft, and other units. These cannot move "uphill" through an elevation line, but they can enter slope hexes at a cost of 2 MP. If a unit moves through a line to a lower elevation ("downhill," cost 1 MP), that unit immediately undergoes an 8-point attack — from the fall, of course. An "NE" result means the unit is unaffected (it found a scalable portion of the slope), but a "D" result means the unit must stop in the lower hex. It is not disabled, but it cannot attack or move further that turn; on the next turn it moves and fires normally. An "X" result destroys the unit.

2.3 Ogres. Ogres cannot move uphill except in slope hexes (cost 2 MP). If an Ogre moves downhill (cost 1 MP), roll two dice; the Ogre loses this many tread units. It may continue to move if it has movement points left. If the loss of treads reduces the Ogre to a lower movement class, it may only continue moving if it has points left in that lower class.

3.0 COMBAT

3.1 "Plunging" fire. If you are adjacent to a cliff (elevation line), an enemy unit is below you, and it's one or two hexes away, you may "fire down" at the enemy at +1 to your die roll. There is no bonus or penalty for "firing up," since this is standard indirect fire. If a unit(s) "firing down" combines its attack with other friendly units, the whole attack receives the +1 plunging bonus. Bonuses are not cumulative; no single attack ever gets more than +1.

3.2 Creating slopes. If you're using *Shockwave* "structure point" rules, units may fire at cliff faces and turn them into slopes that can be climbed. Consider each elevation-line hexside to have 100 SP; when it accumulates this much damage, slope hexes are formed on both sides of the line (units in those hexes are unaffected). Use dummy counters to indicate the slope hexes.

If you don't have *Shockwave*, units cannot create slopes.

4.0 OVERRUNS

4.1 Infantry overruns over cliffs. If you're using *G.E.V.* rules for overrun attacks, infantry units which make overrun attacks over a cliffside (in either direction) get a certain advantage due to surprise. Against any defending units *except* Ogres and infantry, attacking infantry get the *first* attack (an exception to the usual rule of defenders firing first). The defenders then get to fire in reply, and thereafter the overrun proceeds normally.

If the defending units include Ogres or infantry, those units (only) get their usual defensive fire against overrunning infantry before attackers can fire.

5.0 SCENARIO — COMMAND POST

5.1 Set-up. The defending (Paneuropean) player (White) gets the following: 10 armor units, 16 strength points of infantry, two emplaced nuclear weapons (see special rules below), and a D0 Command Post in hex 0804. Defending units may be placed anywhere on the map, "covered" (each unit has another counter on top of it to hide it). The attacking (Combine) player (Black) gets 20 armor units and 14 strength points of infantry which enter from any hex(es) on the east edge of the map. The entry hex counts for movement. The attacker has the option of trading 15 armor units for an Ogre Mark III. The defender uncovers all his units after the attacker's first movement phase. The attacker does not have to commit all forces on Turn 1.

5.2 Special rules. The defender has a hidden route up the cliff to the Command Post. For defending (White) units *only*, consider that the hex boundary between 0804 and 0904 gives *no* terrain penalty for units crossing it.

The two emplaced nukes may be hidden anywhere on the map before play begins in any hex west of the north-south line marked by the two skulls. They *can* both be placed in the same hex. At any time, the defender may detonate a nuke by remote control. All units in that hex and adjacent hexes (except Ogres) are destroyed; Ogre treads and each Ogre weapon undergo a 2-1 attack (divide treads into groups of 5 and attack each group individually). If the nuke is adjacent to an elevation line(s), the nuke hex and the hex across the line both become *slope* hexes. These hexes cannot be entered until one full turn after the nuke is detonated — rocks and dust are still falling. Detonating a nuke does not affect another nuke emplaced in the same hex.

5.3 Victory conditions.

All defending units destroyed: complete Combine victory.

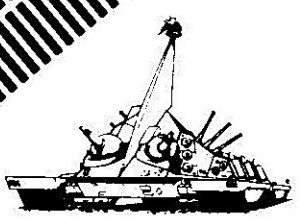
Command Post destroyed and some attackers escape off east edge: Combine victory.

CP destroyed *and* all attackers destroyed: marginal Combine victory.

CP survives but some attackers escape off east edge: marginal Paneuropean victory.

CP survives, attackers destroyed: Paneuropean victory.

CP and 16 attack points of defense survive: complete Paneuropean victory. □



"WARREN, JIM GOULD LEFT THIS IN MY MAILBOX."

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1							
2		HVY	MSL	LT	GEV	HVZ	MHVZ
3	Attack	4	3	2	2	6	6
4	Range	2	4	2	2	8	6
5	Move Phase 1	3	2	3	4	0	1
6	Move Phase 2	0	0	0	3	0	0
7	Defense	3	2	2	2	1	2
8	Terrain mod	0.5	0	0	0.3	0	0
9							
10	Sum	37	34	18	33.8	64	66
11							
12	VP value	6.7272727	6.1818182	3.2727273	6.1454545	11.636364	12
13							
14		LGEV	GEV-PC	SHVY	HOVERTRUCK	TRUCK	
15	Attack	1	1	6	0	0	
16	Range	2	2	3	0	0	
17	Move Phase 1	4	3	3	3	4	
18	Move Phase 2	3	2	0	2	0	
19	Defense	1	2	4	1	0	
20	Terrain mod	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.3	0	
21							
22	Sum	16.9	22.5	67	4.6	0	
23							
24	VP value	3.0727273	4.0909091	12.181818	0.8363636	0	
25							
26		HGEV	MSL GEV	SUPER GEV	FAST TANK	FT II	FT III
27	Attack	3	3	4	3	3	2
28	Range	2	4	3	2	2	2
29	Move Phase 1	3	3	4	4	5	7
30	Move Phase 2	2	2	3	0	0	0
31	Defense	2	1	3	3	3	3
32	Terrain mod	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.5	0	0.5
33							
34	Sum	33.1	34.5	67	34.5	33	34
35							
36	VP value	6.0181818	6.2727273	12.181818	6.2727273	6	6.1818182
37							
38		LR HVY	VLT	TURTLE	TURTLE II	TURTLE III	
39	Attack	2	1	4	3	4	
40	Range	3	2	3	3	3	
41	Move Phase 1	3	3	3	3	1	
42	Move Phase 2	0	0	0	0	0	
43	Defense	3	1	5	7	7	
44	Terrain mod	0.5	0	0.5	0.5	0.5	
45							
46	Sum	34	9	61	68.5	67	
47							
48	VP value	6.1818182	1.6363636	11.090909	12.454545	12.181818	
49							
50		VLMHWZ	GEV-VLHWZ	LR VLMHWZ	LR VLHWZ	SR LMHWZ	LMHWZ
51	Attack	2	1	1	1	1	3
52	Range	8	8	10	11	5	6
53	Move Phase 1	1	3	3	0	2	1
54	Move Phase 2	0	3	0	0	0	0
55	Defense	1	1	1	1	1	1
56	Terrain mod	0	0.3	0	0	0	0
57							
58	Sum	34	33.9	33	33	17	33
59							
60	VP value	6.1818182	6.1636364	6	6	3.0909091	6
61							
62		Powerhouse	Fast GEV	Fast GEV II	Fast GEV III	Fast GEV IV	Fast GEV V
63	Attack	12	3	2	1	2	1
64	Range	2	2	2	2	1	1
65	Move Phase 1	2	5	6	6	5	5
66	Move Phase 2	0	4	6	4	4	4
67	Defense	3	1	1	2	2	1
68	Terrain mod	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
69							
70	Sum	69	34.5	33.2	33.5	33.8	16.9
71							
72	VP value	12.545455	6.2727273	6.0363636	6.0909091	6.1454545	3.0727273
73							

"What is it?"

"It's a bunch of new units he worked up for *Ogre/G.E.V.* using Henry Cobb's construction algorithm in *Space Gamer* 69."

"This is printed on his Macintosh, isn't it? Looks like he used a spreadsheet program . . . What are these — oh, he starts out with the game stats for the existing units, then goes on to add new ones. 'HGEV' — 'Heavy GEV,' right? What's 'LR HVY'?"

"'Long Range Heavy Tank'?"

"Oh. Right. 'VLMHWZ' — 'Very Light Mobile Howitzer,' I guess."

"Look at this! 'Short Range Light Mobile Howitzer.' Wow!"

"Oh, we gotta print this. But how do we turn it into an *article?*"

"I don't know. We'd have to explain what the abbreviations mean, and that these Victory Point values have to be rounded off to the nearest whole point. What about 'terrain modifier'? Will anyone care?"

"Just refer them back to the *SG* 69 algorithm. Remember? Heavy tracked vehicles use 0.5, GEVs use 0.3, everything else is zero. All that says is which column of the Terrain Effects Chart to use."

"We'll have to show this to Steve."

We showed it to Steve Jackson, and Steve had some comments:

STEVE'S COMMENTS

I don't know whether to treat Jim Gould's list of *Ogre* units as a serious suggestion or an intellectual joke. Actually, I guess it's a bit of both. If you look at the units presented, some of them (like the "LR Heavy") make perfect sense. Others (like the "Turtle" series) are harder to believe. And some (like the "GEV-VLHWZ") are just plain silly.

What's the difference? It has to do with *limits*. The Cobb algorithm, on which Jim's spreadsheet was based, was designed to operate on vehicles having "reasonable" ranges of characteristics. It does not take into account that some numbers are flatly impossible; that some possible numbers would still be much more expensive than the algorithm allows; and that some *combinations* are unlikely or impossible. The Cobb algorithm is like an equation with an imaginary root. It predicts a number of solutions — but common sense keeps you from trying to use the impossible ones. And — as Jim is not-so-subtly pointing out — we have never defined "impossible."

In this particular case, "common sense" represents the design limitations of the *Ogre* world's technology. And, while I've published any number of hints, I have never really defined those limitations. So this is an excellent time to do so. Keep in mind that I am talking about *single units* here, and not buildings or Ogre weapons.

Attack Strength

Anything less than 1 would represent a single infantryman, or a popgun on a truck. (A strength of 0, of course, represents a noncombat unit.) The highest single-unit strength seen so far, except for Ogres, is 6 (SHVY and MHWZ). Greater strengths are possible, of course, by adding more guns . . . but unless they are independent *targets*, as they are on an Ogre, you reach a point of diminishing returns because one hit knocks out all that firepower! I would guess that 6 is the practical limit for single-unit attack strength, with 8 the absolute top.

Defense Strength

Remember that, because of the way the CRT works, a defense of 3 (for instance) is far better than a 2, and a 2 is *far* better than a 1. We might be looking at a doubled armor thickness each time. (And defense strength also has to do with mobility. A HWZ really has more armor than a MHWZ . . . but the HWZ is a sitting duck, and its defense strength reflects that.) I suspect that the defense strength of 4 (SHVY) is close to the maximum practical for any single unit. I might believe a 5. I won't believe a 6 until they come up with a better grade of BPC.

Range

The limiting factor on ranges in *Ogre* is not ballistics. It's targeting. To make the game more interesting, one of my basic game-world assumptions was that "spoofing" technology will advance faster than targeting. An Ogre's guns could throw a projectile for many miles — but could not hit anything smaller than a city at that range, and *then* only with the benefit of inertial tracking. The Cruise Missile, Ogre missiles, and HWZ projectiles are large enough to be "smart," and *that* is what gives them some extra range. So . . . at these prices, I don't want to accept any range longer than 10 for *anything* fired from an individual unit. And to qualify for a range longer than 4, it has to be a *heavy* projectile — *minimum* of 5 attack strength, and probably more. (If the Heavy Tank, with attack strength 4, could fire a smart weapon, it would.)

Movement

Here's where we get some *silly* ones. Cross-country speeds of 4 (4/3 for GEV units) are the highest seen in the game. These are intended to represent good old military overspecifications. Speed is vital. If they could make things go any faster at a reasonable cost (or even an unreasonable cost) they would! The only way they're going to get anything faster is to strip *all* the weapons and armor off, or build a road for it. So much for the "Fast GEV" series. And speed would be *much* more expensive with a heavy load. The "Super GEV" would be possible — but it would be state-of-the-art engineering, and would have to cost a lot more than the algorithm might lead you to believe. (The "HGEV," on the other hand, would probably work in the real *Ogre* world, and it looks nasty.)

So — armed with these guidelines, you can go out and create your own units, secure in the knowledge that no *Ogre*-world engineer would laugh you out of the room. Good hunting. □

NEW UNITS AND RULES FOR OGRE/G.E.V.

BY JEFF BOLTON

Ogre/G.E.V. is a great game system. It's perfect for introducing people to gaming, while having enough complexity and interaction to make it interesting for the experienced player. With the addition of *Shockwave* the game system has only gotten better.

There seem to be some small elements missing, however. The following units and optional rules were developed to replace these missing elements. They do not affect the playability of the *Ogre/G.E.V.* game system, but do introduce some new tactical possibilities to the game.

The units added are the dreaded Missile Tank Mark II (occasionally referred to as the micro-Ogre), the never-popular Missile GEV, and the small — and very handy — Pocket Howitzer. The optional rules allow the player to transport the Pocket Howitzer, and place infantry in buildings (making them *real* strongpoints).

NEW UNITS

The Missile Tank Mark II: The idea for the Missile Tank Mark II came from a segment of *The Ogre Book* ("Adding Fear and Loathing to *G.E.V.*" by Timothy C. Wiedel). A tank capable of firing projectiles that fall between "ordinary" missiles and the cruise missile made a lot of sense. With such a sound concept for a unit, only slight modifications were necessary to develop the Missile Tank Mark II.

The Missile Tank Mark II is a regular Missile Tank with its main armament replaced by *two* Ogre-type missiles. This gives the Mark II an attack strength of 6, a range of 5, a defensive strength of 2, and 2 movement points. In

addition, it has an auxiliary weapons system like that found in the GEV-PC or Light GEV (attack strength 1, range 2).

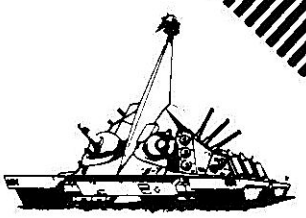
Players will have to keep track of the missiles as they are used. These missiles have all the abilities of regular Ogre missiles except that they have *no* intrinsic defensive value — if the tank is destroyed, they are destroyed.

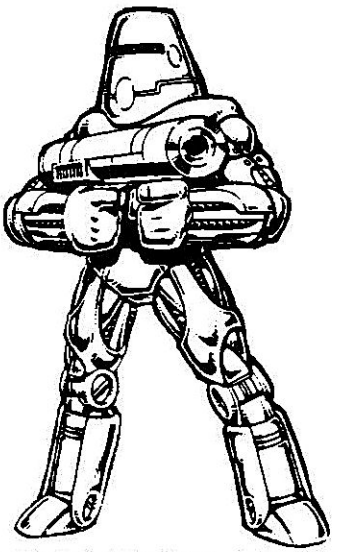
The Missile Tank Mark II may fire *both* missiles at once, but they must be directed against targets in the *same hex*. The reason is that the Missile Tank Mark II may be firing Ogre missiles, but it does not have the same targeting capabilities. The Missile Tank Mark II may fire its auxiliary weapons system along with the missiles. The auxiliary may be directed against a different target hex than the missiles.

The Missile Tank Mark II moves and is affected by terrain like a regular Missile Tank. In games giving players a specific number of armor units, the Missile Tank Mark II counts as *two* armor units (12 Victory Points).

The Missile GEV: In order to give forces made up of GEVs, Light GEVs, and GEV-PCs (along with their accompanying infantry) some fire support capable of keeping up with them, the Missile GEV was developed. Its role is that of the horse artillery accompanying the cavalry and dragoons of a bygone era. A hybrid weapon, the Missile GEV consists of a Missile Tank's weaponry and fire system mounted on a GEV-PC chassis. This gives it an attack strength of 3, range of 4, defensive strength of 2, and movement of 3/2. The Missile GEV cannot carry infantry.

The Missile GEV is subject to all the GEV movement restrictions. It counts as 1½ armor units (i.e., two Missile GEVs are the armor unit equivalent of 3 GEVs or 6 Light GEVs). A Missile GEV is worth 9 VPs.





The Pocket Howitzer: The Pocket Howitzer is a smaller version of the rocket cannons represented by the regular Howitzers and Mobile Howitzers. With the addition of the optional rule allowing it to be transported, its role becomes one of providing cheap, semi-mobile firepower for defense or offense. Generally, it would be found in positions that, with time, would be converted for use by regular Howitzers or in areas where Mobile Howitzers are scarce.

The Pocket Howitzer has an attack strength of 4, range of 6, defensive strength of 1, and movement 0. It counts as one armor unit for scenarios (6 Victory Points).

OPTIONAL RULES

Transporting Pocket Howitzers: Pocket Howitzers can be transported in the same fashion as infantry and marines, with the following modifications:

Only GEV-PCs, trucks, and hovertrucks may carry Pocket Howitzers. No unit can carry more than one Pocket Howitzer at a time. Pocket Howitzers do count against stacking limitations.

Pocket Howitzers may load or unload only in the same hex as the transporting vehicle. It takes one full turn to load or unload a Pocket Howitzer.

If a Pocket Howitzer is unloaded in a swamp hex, it is permanently disabled on a die roll of 1 or 2. Towns double the Pocket Howitzer's defense.

Pocket Howitzers may *not* load and unload from a transporting vehicle during the same game turn (including the second, or GEV, movement phase).

Pocket Howitzers may *not* fire while loaded on a transporting vehicle.

Infantry in Buildings: It seems odd that infantry, and their marine counterparts, would not take cover and fight in the buildings now available with the ***Shockwave*** expansion set. It's hard to believe that the soldiers of the future would not try to use this ready-made cover, putting as much protection as possible between themselves and the enemy. To use buildings in this way, follow these suggestions:

Lasers, laser towers, and nuclear reactors may *not* contain infantry (because of their weapons system, targeting, and/or power generation space requirements).

Infantry *may* be placed in buildings. A building may contain up to 3 strength points of infantry or marines for every 10 SPs of the building. For example, a 30 SP building could hold 9 strength points of infantry. Infantry inside a building do *not* count towards the stacking limits of units outside the building and in the same hex.

It costs infantry 1 movement point to enter or leave a building, along with the regular terrain cost of the hex. To show that infantry are in a building, place them under the building counter.

Infantry in a building may treat any attacking units in the same hex as overrunning units; i.e., their strength against these units is doubled. They attack units in adjacent hexes normally. Infantry in a building may only be overrun by other infantry. Armor units may only attack with fire or ramming attacks directed against the building.

Infantry inside a building may declare an overrun, but must leave the building to overrun units outside the building, spending the appropriate movement points.

Infantry may *not* enter a building containing enemy infantry except as an overrun attack. The building is not affected — in game terms — by infantry fighting inside it. Because of this, buildings can be cleared and captured by infantry.

Infantry inside a building suffer casualties according to the damage the building has taken. For every 25 SP the building loses in one turn (round down), the occupying infantry suffer a 1-1 attack. Players should note that the destruction of a building does *not* mean that the defending infantry is automatically eliminated. This represents the greater defensive abilities of infantry in buildings. If a building is completely destroyed, any occupying infantry are subject to the terrain restrictions of the hex they occupy.

CONCLUSION

Players who choose to use these new units and optional rules will find themselves presented with a wide range of new tactical possibilities. Those who enjoy hordes of GEVs will find the Missile GEV most useful. Those who want massive — if limited — firepower will use the Missile Tank Mark II. The Pocket Howitzer is for those who want relatively inexpensive firepower with good range and some mobility. The optional rules aid both sides in any scenario, although the ability to take cover in buildings does aid the defense. Good luck to all commanders! □

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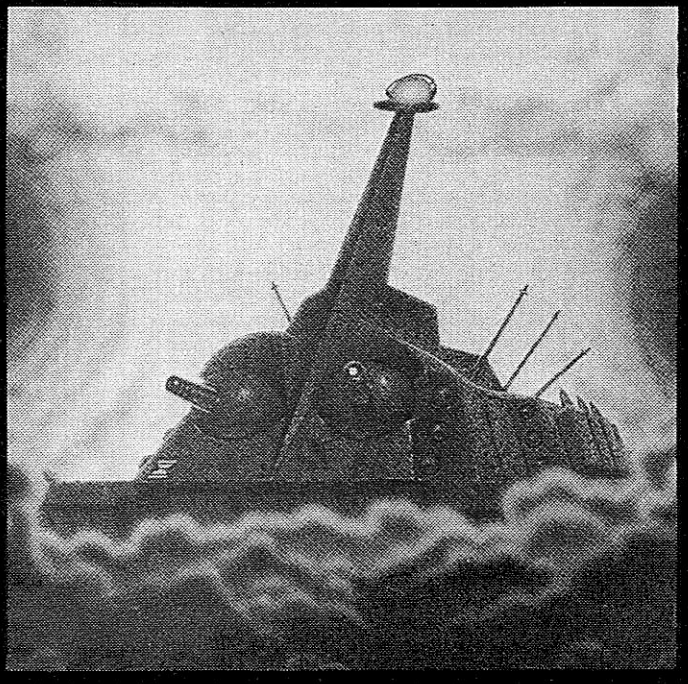

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New Cards for *Nuclear Escalation*

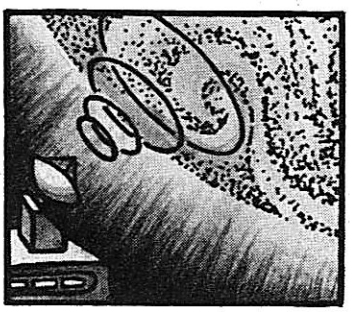
by Richard M. Heli
Illustrations by Dan Willems

Those of you who bought *Nuclear War* or *Nuclear Escalation* (so you could always go first, right?) may have wondered what to do with those blank cards. Well, here are some suggestions that will further the madness. Note that you must have *Nuclear Escalation* to use most of these cards.

Thanks to Conflict Simulations at the University of California at Davis for playtesting these cards.

SPECIAL

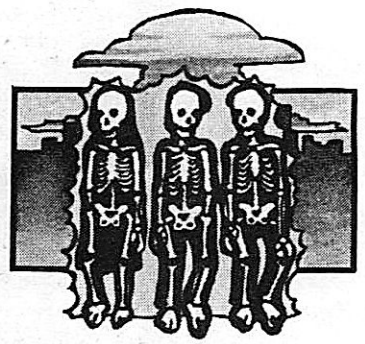
Orbital Mind Control



Allows you to redirect any one missile (or bomber) attack. It must be launched by a Titan or Atlas. To use, roll one die. Redirection is effective unless a cloud is rolled. In either case, Mind Control is removed. If redirection fails, the original target retains that status. The Mind Control Satellite remains "up" until used, whether successfully or not. It may only be eliminated by a Killer Satellite.

Neutron Bomb

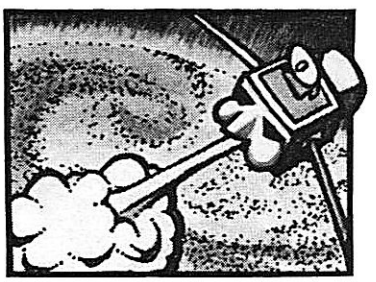
Deliverable by Titan, Minuteman, or Atlas. Does no damage, but allows you to take three random cards from the target's hand. After drawing, you must immediately discard enough cards to bring your total back to nine. Target can draw up to nine at the end of his or her *next* turn.



Neutron Bomb

SPECIAL

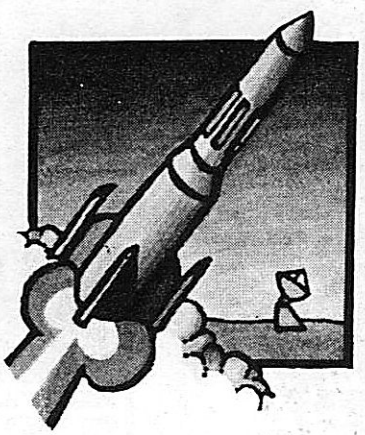
Weather Control



Launch this satellite with any missile. On any subsequent turn, the launching player may drop it on any other player. To do so, the player rolls the die. A cloud means no effect; otherwise the target player loses his or her next turn. In either case, the card is discarded. The Weather Control roll is made after the launching player has drawn a card, but before a regular attack is made. The satellite may remain up indefinitely until used or destroyed by a Killer Satellite.

ASAT

Can be played to shoot down a Space Platform or Killer Satellite that is used against the player.



ASAT

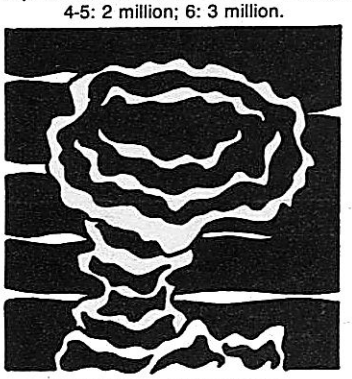
SPECIAL

Mole

Whenever a spy (or saboteur) is played against you, you may play this special card. The spy's action is nullified and the spy (or saboteur) card is placed in your hand. The mole is discarded. A mole may be counterspied.

Cobalt Bomb

This warhead may be delivered on any delivery system except an MX. If delivered on a bomber, it must be the only warhead on the bomber. If successfully delivered, the card is placed in front of the player. Each time the target player's turn comes up, he or she rolls the die to determine the number of people lost to radiation. 1: 0; 2-3: 1 million; 4-5: 2 million; 6: 3 million.



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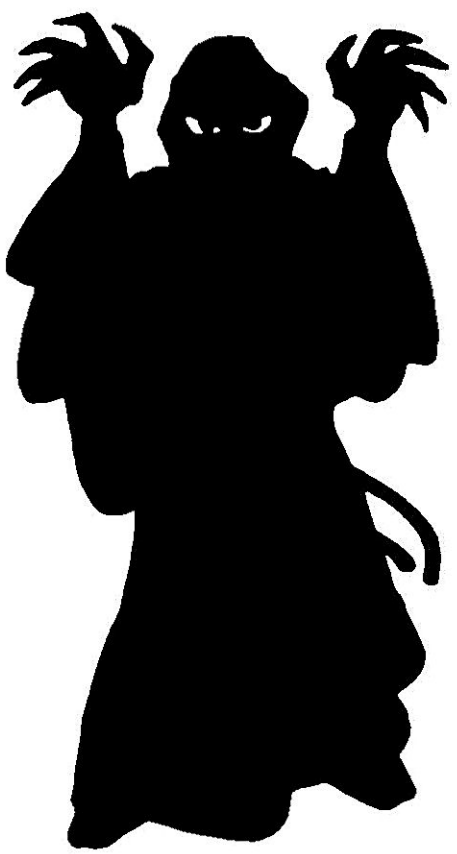
Adding Life to the Undead in AD&D®

by Russell Grant Collins and Daniel Schabilion



Arvis the Thief looked up. "This lock's just too tough. I guess we'll have to break the door down."

"Here, let me show you how it's done," said Closne the Monk as he picked the lock with ease.

Arvis scowled. He'd known how to do it once, but then they'd run into that Spectre . . .

Loximor the Cleric knelt before his superior. "I wish to know what I have done to offend Thor."

"What makes you think you have offended Him?"

"He has not granted me the spells He once did."

"How long has this gone on?"

"Ever since I failed to turn that Vampire and it struck me . . ."

Sound familiar? One of the worst things that can happen to a character who has gained a few levels in ***Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*** is to run into a form of undead creature which drains away all that hard-earned experience. And such a creature may not drain all the members of the party equally, so that half of the group remains at high levels and the other half is now back at low levels. It's especially bad with Spectres and Vampires, who drain *two* levels each time they hit. Let them hit the same character a couple of times and he'll never catch up. Either the party will have to split up into two (or more) parties along the lines of the new levels, or some of the party will be in adventures that don't fit their level.

No mythology or legend that we know of presents an undead creature which drains the experience and abilities of its victims. Blood, yes. Will power, yes. Levels, no. Why, then, does ***AD&D*** do it that way?

There is another way to make undead fearsome without inexplicably draining experience from the character. It wasn't until one of us used a Lamia in an adventure for the first time, only to see the more experienced players warn the clerics to stay back because of the Wisdom-draining abilities of the Lamia, that we realized that draining an *attribute*, even temporarily, can be just as fearsome as draining levels. It seems more faithful to the original fantasy sources, too. That's how we came up with this system.

Abilities of undead creatures are modified to drain characteristics instead of experience. There is precedent for this in ***AD&D*** — after all, Shadows already drain Strength. However, this tends to hurt fighters more than other classes, even though fighters generally have more strength to drain. The one characteristic that is important to almost every character is Constitution. Having undead monsters drain CON is appropriate, because it indicates general health.

In all cases, remember to subtract any bonus hit points to which characters are no longer entitled. When CON is restored, they will regain these hit points at the same time (and don't forget that real low CONs get hit point *minuses*, which also are reversed when CON is restored). If a character has taken enough damage that these lost bonus hit points are all he or she has left, then that character is dying, unless a cleric can cast some sort of cure spell within a round or two. Also, a character who is required to make a Resurrection or System Shock roll before lost CON is recovered does it at the lowered CON. Any character killed by an undead or whose CON is reduced to zero becomes that kind of undead, as before. All other special abilities and attributes of these undead are just as before.

Wights drain one point of CON each time they hit, in addition to the 1-4 points of damage that they do. This drained CON returns to the character during a night's rest sufficient to allow the character to memorize new spells (even if the character doesn't use spells).

Wraiths also drain one point of CON each time they hit, in addition to doing 1-6 points of damage. However, this drained CON comes back slowly. A full day's rest will restore one point of CON, as well as a hit point if the character needs to heal that way as well.

Spectres drain two points of CON each time they hit and this lost CON is restored in the same way as CON lost to a Wraith.

Vampires are among the most feared of the undead . . . and with good reason. Although they drain only one point of CON with each hit, this drain is *permanent*, along with all side effects of this loss. If a Vampire drains a character's CON to a level below the minimum required for the character's class, then he or she may continue in that class, suffering a 10% reduction on all earned experience from then on. (In certain cases, such as a Ranger with a CON of 3, the penalty might be larger than this, but never more than 25%).

As might be expected, a Restore spell will restore lost CON, even that which is lost "permanently," according to the explanation of the spell in the ***Player's Handbook*** and ***Dungeon Master's Guide***. A wish will also restore the points lost.

In order to keep the players guessing, the DM might occasionally want to change the characteristic these undead drain, perhaps creating a Spectre that drains STR instead of CON or a Wight that drains DEX. Along these lines, we created the following undead, which is turned as a Wight:

Night Horror

NIGHT HORROR
FREQUENCY: Rare
NUMBER APPEARING: 1-6
ARMOR CLASS: 4
MOVE: 12"
HIT DICE: 4 + 3
% IN LAIR: 75%
TREASURE TYPE: Nil
NUMBER OF ATTACKS: 1
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2-7
SPECIAL ATTACKS: CHA drain (see below)
SPECIAL DEFENSES: Only hit by magic or silver weapons
MAGIC RESISTANCE: Normal
INTELLIGENCE: Average
ALIGNMENT: NE
SIZE: M
PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil
Attack/Defense Modes: Nil

Night Horrors hate anything beautiful. If they get their hands on any jewelry or work of art they will destroy it completely; other treasures will probably be thrown away as useless. A Night Horror may appear to be an exceptionally beautiful humanoid in order to lure adventurers to approach close enough for it to touch them. When someone gets close, it will dissolve the illusion, causing all who see it to save vs. petrification or be paralyzed with fear. The touch of a Night Horror, in addition to doing 2-7 points of damage, drains one point of the victim's Charisma permanently. Any character whose CHA is drained to zero or who is killed by a Night Horror becomes a Night Horror under the control of the killer.

Night Horrors can be hurt only by magic or silver weapons, and are immune to Charm and Sleep spells. □

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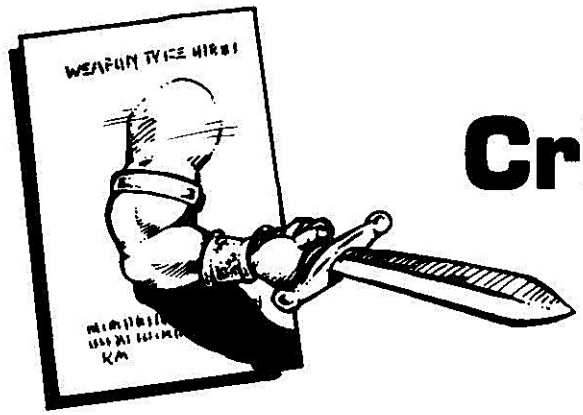


A Simple Critical Hit System for Any RPG

by Tom Riley

(READER ADVISORY: This article includes explicit descriptions of violent "critical hit" injuries. If you're likely to be unsettled by some pretty gross images, you may want to skip this piece. Proceed at your own risk.
—The Editors)

If you're the kind of GM I am, you're dissatisfied with most critical hit systems on the market. Most involve die rolls which merely determine the area hit, and not the specific nature of the injury. Some allow for aimed shots, but these are usually more trouble than they're worth, and of doubtful authenticity. Almost all are extremely cumbersome. So what do you do? You use the crit-hit systems, but don't really like them. Or you discard an optional system. Or you play a game that ignores crit-hits altogether — this is probably the most sensible route to take. After all, your players still get to slice up that two-headed ogre, don't they?

Yes, they do. But what's the point of having a two-headed ogre if you can't slice one of the heads off and still have a one-headed ogre? Where are the severed limbs, the caved-in skulls, and the hanging eyes that every bloodthirsty creator of worlds longs for?

They are right here, in a system so simple it actually makes some games *easier* to play. I use it with ***Tunnels & Trolls***, one of the easiest systems around, and find that it actually shortens most combats. And it can easily be adapted to any system, commercial or homegrown. I will describe the system at work in ***T&T***, ***The Fantasy Trip***, ***GURPS***, and ***Basic Dungeons & Dragons***. But you should find it simple to adapt to *any* RPG.

The basis for this system is a deck of ordinary 3" x 5" index cards. Each card represents a possible "opening" for a particular critical hit, and has the following information written on it: (1) the type of weapon needed to score the hit; (2) the minimum number of hits needed to do the special damage; and (3) a description of the damage inflicted and its effects on the victim. For example (from my own ***T&T*** deck):

WEAPON TYPE — IMPALING WEAPON.
MINIMUM DAMAGE — 3 HITS.
RIGHT EYE PIERCED, BRAIN PENETRATED.
Victim must make a L4SR-LK or die. Even if he makes the roll, he is permanently blinded in the right eye (−4 DEX), his IQ is permanently reduced to 3 (and cannot be raised by AP), and he falls unconscious with STR 1.

The GM should prepare a rather large number of such cards. (I would say twenty cards is the minimum.) Other examples will be given later, but GMs can create cards as they see fit, as long as they are careful to give weapon types, reasonable minimum damage, and sensible descriptions of the effects. It should take more than three hits to chop off a troll's head — and the effects of decapitation should be considerably greater than those of cutting off a little finger.

The Method

How are the cards used in combat? That depends on the system. In all cases, the cards are shuffled thoroughly at the beginning of a play session, and put in the middle of the table. Then, in ***TFT***, ***GURPS***, ***D&D***, or any other system which uses a "to-hit" roll, the opportunity to pick a card depends on getting an especially good roll. A ***TFT*** or ***GURPS*** character who rolls 8 below his adjDX, or who rolls a 3, gets to pick one card. Ditto a ***D&D*** character who beats his minimum "to-hit" roll by 5, or who rolls a 20. A character who meets the requirements for weapon type and damage gets the hit.

Since ***T&T*** doesn't use a "to-hit" roll, the cards have to be used a little differently. Whenever a team (or individual) scores any damage on a foe, whether HTH or by missiles or spells, they can draw cards at a cost of 5 hits subtracted from the damage total for every card taken. They must, however, state how many cards they will "buy" before they can actually examine the merchandise. The hits not spent in this fashion are distributed normally among the losers, or inflicted on the specific target of the missiles or spell. Any character trying for a crit-hit who can meet the requirements on any card gets the critical hit. However, in HTH combat, a winning team may choose only one card to take effect, no matter how many cards have been "purchased."

Here's an example: Edgelaf the Eager and Athelston Appleseed are both armed with light flails (crushing, 3d+4); Edgelaf also wields a dirk (cutting/impaling, 2d+1). Edgelaf has 16 combat adds and Athelston has 12. The two warriors face a pair of goblins, each with MR 30.

Edgelaf rolls 16 for his flail, plus 4 = 20, and 10 for his dirk, plus 1 = 11. He adds his personal combat bonus of 16 for a grand total of 20 + 11 + 16 = 47. Athelston rolls a 12, adds 4 and then 12, for a grand total of 28. Humans' total = 75.

One goblin rolls 8 on four dice and adds 15. The other rolls 10 and adds 15. Goblins' total = 48. The humans win by 27 hits. They decide to choose three cards. 27 − 15 = 12. Each goblin takes 6 hits.

Unluckily for them, the humans draw two cards asking for a cutting weapon rated for STR 12 or higher. The third card they draw, however, is the first example given in this article. If the warriors had nothing but flails, they would have no use for this card, and their gamble of 15 hits would have been a waste. But Edgelaf's dirk can be used as an impaling weapon, so the card is useful after all. Dodging under the attack of one of the goblins, Edgelaf jams his dagger in the beastie's eye. The 6 hits he does are more than enough to penetrate the brain. One of the goblins is out of the fight. (The GM may want to roll up the fallen goblin's LK and make his L4SR. But as the delvers will probably cut his throat soon, why bother?) And the remaining goblin is probably doomed.

What this system simulates is the search for

openings which must comprise a large part of fighting to the death. Edgelaf and Athelston see one opening, try for it, and find it blocked by the goblins. They try for another and are hindered again. Then Edgelaf sees an opening for his dirk — and this time succeeds. But if he'd had a baton in his hand instead of a dirk, that opening would have been useless to him — and waiting for it would have wasted part of his attack.

With regard to weapon type, I recognize three basic categories: impaling weapons, cutting weapons, and crushing weapons. Impaling weapons include arrows, quarrels, spears, rapiers, and estocs. Cutting weapons include most swords and axes. Crushing weapons include clubs, maces, barroom chairs, and the bare fists of an occasional barbarian. Please note that some weapons fall into more than one category. (In *GURPS* these are "compound weapons.") Many swords feature both points for impaling and edges for cutting. Heavy swords could be used as crushing weapons as well. And bare hands can be used as impaling weapons under certain circumstances. (Yes, you can kill a man by piercing eye and brain with a thrust of your finger. And if you lost your lunch reading that, this article is definitely not for you.) GMs may also want to include a category for animal bites (and allow the *human* animal to take advantage of it). Finally, they may want to include addition stipulations: For instance, I require that the cutting weapon used to lop off an arm or leg be rated for STR 12 or higher. But all these decisions may be made easily with some common sense.

Examples

To give interested GMs an idea of what can be done, here are three cards each for ***T&T***, ***TFT***, ***GURPS***, and ***D&D***.

T&T

1) WEAPON TYPE — CRUSHING WEAPON.
MINIMUM DAMAGE — 3 HITS.
BROKEN NOSE.
Victim loses 2 from his CHR.

2) WEAPON TYPE — CUTTING WEAPON REQUIRING STR 12 OR MORE.
MINIMUM DAMAGE — ½ CON OR MR OF VICTIM.
SEVERED HEAD.
Victim loses use of head and therefore dies.

3) WEAPON TYPE — IMPALING WEAPON.
MINIMUM DAMAGE — ¼ CON OR MR OF VICTIM.
HEART PIERCED.
Victim dies.

TFT

1) WEAPON TYPE — CRUSHING WEAPON.
MINIMUM DAMAGE — 8 HITS.
FRACTURED SKULL.
Victim must make a 4/ST roll or die. Even if he makes the roll, he falls unconscious with ST 1. He must then make a 4/basic ST roll to avoid brain damage which will subtract 5 from the total of his DX and IQ.

2) WEAPON TYPE — CUTTING WEAPON.
MINIMUM DAMAGE — 2 HITS.
SEVERE BLEEDER.
Victim loses 1 ST/turn hereafter until attended by a physicker. The physicker can immediately staunch the bleeding, but must take 5 minutes afterward to bind the wound.

3) WEAPON TYPE — CUTTING OR IMPALING WEAPON.
MINIMUM DAMAGE — 3 HITS.
CASTRATION.
If victim is male, he loses his ability to procreate (along with some of his pride). He falls to the ground helpless, and cannot get up until he makes a 3/ST roll, one try per turn.

GURPS

1) WEAPON TYPE — CRUSHING/COMPOUND (ST 11 OR MORE)
MINIMUM DAMAGE — ⅓ VICTIM'S HT
RIGHT ARM BROKEN
Victim drops shield or ready weapon in right hand. If right-handed, victim fights left-handed at DX−4. Damage of HT/2 cripples arm.

2) WEAPON TYPE — CUTTING/COMPOUND.
MINIMUM DAMAGE — 8 HITS.
EVISCERATED.
Victim falls, losing 1 HT every five seconds until given medical aid. Incapacitated until wound heals.

3) WEAPON TYPE — IMPALING.
MINIMUM DAMAGE — 4 HITS.
BLINDED IN ONE EYE.
Use "crippling" rules to determine whether eye can heal. Victim is stunned, and will fight at −4 DX until the eye recovers.

D&D

1) WEAPON TYPE — CRUSHING WEAPON.
MINIMUM DAMAGE — 5 HITS.
CONCUSSION.
Victim must save against paralysis or fall unconscious for 1d6 game turns. Even if he saves, he is stunned and cannot fight the next combat turn.

2) WEAPON TYPE — CUTTING OR IMPALING WEAPON.
MINIMUM DAMAGE — 2 HITS.
SCARRED.
Victim receives a permanent facial scar which reduces his CHR by 1.

3) WEAPON TYPE — CRUSHING WEAPON.
MINIMUM DAMAGE — 5 HITS.
BROKEN NECK.
Victim must save against paralysis or be permanently paralyzed from the neck down.

Observe that some critical hits require a straight number of hits, while others (in ***T&T***) require a certain fraction of the victim's CON. It should be as easy to pierce a werewolf's eye as a normal person's — but harder to break the werewolf's arm.

Details

Characters with many adds will be able to choose many cards, so GMs using this system with ***T&T*** should shuffle in a number of cards reading simply NO CRITICAL HIT. Start with ten — and think about adding more when your players move up in levels.

If monsters with MRs take damage to DEX, subtract 2 MR for each DEX lost — but always leave the monster with at least MR 1.

Scoring these special hits should be worth extra experience. I award 5 AP per critical hit scored.

If players can use this system, of course, so can the GM (and the GM's monsters). This is only fair, and there should be no complaints if player characters get mutilated. Besides, being a one-armed fighter in a two-armed universe can be a great character builder.

Still, GMs may wish to modify their magic systems in order to give mutilated characters a small chance of becoming whole again. ***T&T***'s standard healing spell, *Poor Baby*, seemed to me too simple to regenerate body parts, and the *Wound Weld* spell from ***Catacombs of the Bear Cult*** only helps if the lost part is handy. I therefore got the humanitarian sorcerer Subbrachius the Sly to invent the L12 spell *Hale 'n' Hearty*: completely heals all wounds and restores lost body parts. It only works on the living, and therefore cannot restore a lost head. Cost: 2x restored CON of subject. Range: —. At the GM's option, this spell may be made very difficult to obtain. (The local wizard's guild may not have heard of it.) The quest for a wizard who can make a character whole again constitutes an interesting adventure.

The GM should keep in mind that some critical hits may bypass armor altogether. All suits of armor must at least have eye-slits in a visor, so that a hit to the eye will always get through. By the same token, there are conditions under which some critical hits *cannot* take place. If you draw the BROKEN ARM card against a giant cobra, it's not going to do you one bit of good. Likewise the HEART PIERCED card against the Evil Tin Man.

The advantages of this system over the random tables in many games are several. First, the cards are much easier to use than die-rolling tables. Second, the critical hits are automatically limited by the weapons used: There can be no nonsense about chopping off a leg with a bludgeon or knocking a figure unconscious with a stiletto. Third, the system is endlessly expandable. If you think of or read about a new way to suffer ignoble death in battle, just make out a new card and shufffle it in. If you think a certain injury should occur more often, add duplicate cards. GMs with medical textbooks handy will have a field day.

So get out your index cards and get going. Those arms and legs are just waiting to be chopped off. □

KEEPING POSTED

The Rise and Fall of GAMING UNIVERSAL

by Bob McLain
GU Publisher

There's a plaque on my office wall that reads: "Thou shalt not lose money in business." I live by those words. Only rarely am I forced to seek penance for disobeying what I've come to accept as the Eleventh Commandment. So you'd think, after all these years of conservatism, I would have known better than to submit to a silly impulse, a rash outgrowth of what had been a pleasant pastime. And it started so innocently . . .

Seduction

I'm not a believer in the paranormal. Mystical visions and psychic flashes don't happen here in northeastern Pennsylvania (and if they did, only the tourists would have them). But *something* happened during the winter of '83 — something that turned my Scots/Brooklyn practicality into a nightmarish need for self-expression, creativity, and independence. It was horrible. Worst of all, these foreign desires weren't fooled by my unspoken resolve to satiate them with an experimental novel or a screenplay for *Hill Street Blues*. Nothing so simple. I'd been hooked and hooked good. The choice had been made: Bob McLain will publish and edit a magazine about play-by-mail gaming.

OK. Let's think about this, I thought.

Back then *Nuts & Bolts* held the monopoly on PBM magazines, and it was averaging 50-100 misspellings and grammatical errors per page. I can spell (and have a moldy first place ribbon from a fifth grade spelling contest to prove it). My grammar ain't bad, either. So maybe, just maybe, I can pull this thing off.

Winter '83 melted into Spring '83. I began to realize just how little I knew about PBM. There were scores of games I hadn't played. Being a conscientious soul, I took it upon myself to sample as many of them as I could; it was my editorial duty. Provided, of course, I didn't have to pay.

And here we are at the "fringe benefits" that befall the editor of a PBM magazine. I was deluged with invitations to play games for free. Typically, a moderator would call or write, extol the virtues of his past/current/future release(s), and ask the pleasure of my participation. I was easy prey. For years previous these bloodsuckers had been levying regular turn fees that trimmed my wallet faster than a Scarsdale Diet. Now it was time to get even.

Before long I held positions in over thirty PBM games. This horrifying situation was compounded by the scores of phone calls and letters I received each week from persistent allies who couldn't understand the sluggish pace of my diplomacy. I missed favorite episodes of *Hill Street Blues* and *Miami Vice* formulating long-distance treaties. Some jokers thought nothing of calling at one, two, sometimes *three* in the morning (they made wonderful first targets). It's hard to be nice to a guy who interrupts dream-sessions with Marilyn Chambers just to ask if "the Plastic Shekel is still on world 181."

This crash course in PBM paid off handsomely, however. Enough grist had entered the mill by year's end to allow me to assemble my very first issue of *Gaming Universal* (then called *PBM Universal*). It met with enthusiastic acceptance. Four-color covers and typeset text came as a veritable renaissance to the tolerant PBM community, which had previously known only such semi-professional publications as the aforementioned *Nuts & Bolts*.

Competition

But my hope to dominate the literary spotlight faded when news of a London-based rival put a damper on *GU*'s proud debut. Freelance author and former *Fire & Movement* Contributing Editor Nicky Palmer, it seemed, had also been assailed by that diabolical surge of creative inspiration I was already regretting. His journal of postal gaming — entitled *Flagship* — had been unveiled in England a full month before *GU* began its journey through the intricate U.S. Bulk Mail system. Naturally, we became fast friends.

Palmer sought to harness the so-called "international market" by splitting coverage between American and foreign games. With the help of his partner, Chris Harvey, he

enlisted Rick Loomis of Flying Buffalo as *Flagship*'s U.S. distributor. (This turned out to be a lesser coup than it should have been — Loomis' lethargic marketing was a valueless asset, and his cloak of credibility had lost its past selling power). I relied on my own "skills" to sell the 100% U.S. oriented *Gaming Universal*. A red-blooded Yank hawking American literature apparently struck the right chord here in the patriotic States; I was outselling Palmer/Loomis by 2:1.

The two premieres of *Gaming Universal* and *Flagship* gave PBM the impetus it needed to burst the private cocoon that had shielded it from true expansion. By their very look both magazines trounced the long-standing axiom that anything PBM *must* be amateurish. Indeed, 1984 saw a bumper crop of new moderators, among them several well-financed, well-managed operations. The GAMA directors finally gave play-by-mail a category on the Origins Awards ballot, and Rick Loomis organized a moderator's association to discourage the unhealthy business practices that have traditionally ravaged the hobby. But perhaps most significant, major articles about PBM appeared in such widely read magazines as *Games* and *Analog*. Hobby pundits predicted 1984 to be the start of a "Golden Age." Good times for all, happy days are here again.

Realization

So why has *Gaming Universal* — the coinspirator of this joyous rebirth — hung a "ceased publication" sign on its front cover?

Marketing research would have given me the answer. The play-by-mail industry *cannot* support a slick, professionally produced magazine that has as its base policy "no expense spared." Mainstream gaming is much the same. Look at *Gameplay*, a fine publication with a similar policy that crashed after 14 issues. The smart operators are Steve Jackson Games, which subsidizes *Space Gamer* with a successful line of products, and TSR, which created an appetite for *Dragon* and now just leans back and feeds all those hungry *D&D*ers monthly portions of their favorite meal. Makes my mouth water.

While it's true the publishing racket isn't all moonlight and roses, there *are* pockets of good times mixed in with the printer bills, flaky deadlines, and defective typesetting equipment. I had my share of enjoyment. I also had my share of education under fire, and the deceptive feeling that I "profitted intellectually" from this venture saved my sanity when *Gaming Universal*'s year-end financial report was delivered by my accountant (who will never work in this town again).

Recollection

But let's backtrack. Let's return to those thrilling days of pre-publication, when the world could be conquered by anyone with a grammar handbook and a ten-page article about *Feudal Lords*. Now *that* was living. The PBM moderators were pelting me with free game positions, requests for advertising rates, and friendly words of encouragement. Rick Loomis phoned to chat. Larry Niven sent me a two-page letter all about why he couldn't possibly take time out of his busy schedule to write short articles for 4¢/word. Robert Silverberg used friendlier language to reject twice that sum. And Fritz Leiber, fantasist that he is, thought I was offering *40¢*/word (not even a strategy piece on *Ganglords* by Frank Sinatra is worth that much).

You can see my problem. Undue fixation on "big name" authors can be disastrous to a fledgeling magazine's budget. If I had, for instance, matched *Omni*'s rate of $1000+ and bought myself a chunk of attention from Larry Niven, chances are the issue that contained his story would have been a big seller (given proper advertising and promotion, which don't come cheap either). But then what? How do I top it? Maybe put the wife to work and use her salary to bait Stephen King? Or cash in my negotiable securities to hook Norman Mailer?

I guess you could say I compromised. Issue 2 of *Gaming Universal* featured an "epic poem" by L. Sprague de Camp. What a stinker. Readers warned me never to veer from PBM topics again. Lesson 1 had been learned: Don't mortgage the farm when 1¢/word will satisfy the demand.

My Writers' Guidelines listed pay rates of "1-3¢/word, on acceptance." Of the other PBM magazines, only *Flagship* actually paid their authors. However, what left me with a surplus of 75 articles wasn't the *amount* of pay, but the fact that I sent checks immediately; standard practice, I found, was to wait until publication before squaring the accounts. This doesn't faze amateur writers, who many times care only about seeing their names in print, but the professionals I contacted — Steve Jackson, Matthew Costello, Dana Lombardy, Forrest Johnson, etc. — were more interested in top salary, payable yesterday. It was a tough decision to make. I could save hundreds by relying on amateurs, or I could supplement the standard menu with expensive gourmet entrees. Lesson 2: Be frugal with everything *except* good prose.

What it all comes down to is this: A magazine must achieve a balance between sparkling and semi-sparkling articles — the more funds available, the more "fizz" an editor may put in each issue. Too much fizz and the magazine quickly evaporates to nothing; too little fizz and the magazine turns flat. How simple.

Gaming Universal had too much fizz. The $600 color separations, the $1000 layout design, and the $100 columns bubbled over the rim of my budget, soaking through my checkbook and foretelling an early demise. I like to think I couldn't see the writing on the wall. That's what I *like* to think. If the truth must be told, I was "riding the wave" and having too much fun to come down. Every issue of *Gaming Universal* had to be better than the last; I wouldn't compromise the quality. Once people tell you that you have the "best PBM magazine," it's hard to risk losing their interest by cutting back. In the end not doing so was my downfall.

I have a right to be thoroughly soured on PBM in general and PBM magazine production in particular. *Gaming Universal* cost me two years of effort and thousands of lost dollars. And what do I have to show for it? Boxes of old magazines, about 300 play-by-mail rulebooks, plenty of expensive stationery, and (maybe) a $20 check for this article. [*$17.40 — Ed.*] Funny thing is, I'm not at all soured by the way things turned out. I'd do it over again — with slight modifications — if I had the chance. A little self-flagellation never hurt anyone, right?

Evaluation

So what *did* I gain from this two-year fiasco? Fun, that's what. Lots of fun. And a good deal of satisfaction, too. I found myself able to affect the course of the PBM industry, both through private conversations with moderators and the magazine itself. Only months earlier I had been "just another gamer." Same ideas, same opinions, but no platform from which to orate. *Gaming Universal* was my soapbox.

Also, *Gaming Universal* paved the way for other, ancillary ventures like the PBM Mass Mailer, which enabled moderators to reach 10,000 prospective customers. *That* was profitable. (Ironically, though, without the magazine to lend me credibility, I never could have organized a Mass Mailer.)

The 1984 Origins convention was another highpoint — rather than rent a booth like everyone else, I hired two former Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders to pass out *GU* flyers to the mostly male, mostly single attendees. The response, as you might expect, was phenomenal. So was the expense.

See? We're back to expense again. The circle completes. And for this one-man operation, that was all she wrote.

Conclusion

Since *Gaming Universal* was a fairy tale of sorts, it had to have a happy ending. Nothing so dramatic as the wealthy white knight riding in on his great steed, Investment Capital, but a happy ending nonetheless. My subscribers are all receiving a free copy of *Flagship* and a $10 certificate redeemable for any products marketed by Advent Games. (Totalled, that's $13 worth of merchandise — far above the $5 most of the subscribers were due.) My advertisers will see their ads printed in *Flagship*, and my authors have been approached by other magazines anxious to tap into their typewriters. No loose ends.

Gaming Universal remains in limbo, right where it belongs. Contrary to some of the printed reports, I never sold the magazine, nor did I conclude a merger deal with *Flagship*'s Nicky Palmer. Why not? Because, on certain quiet nights, when common sense and business savvy have sneaked off arm-in-arm to the Hilton, I get these recurrent flashbacks — creative urges that were never properly exorcised, demanding outlet. Only difference is, this time I have things well in hand: I just turn on *Hill Street Blues*.

"Roll Call: 7:03 A.M." □

Where We're Going
by Steve Jackson

Sometimes I go into a game store and sigh. Not because there isn't lots of good stuff out there. There is. But one of my favorite genres is being neglected. What do I mean? I mean *silly*. We aren't being *silly* enough. Like . . .

Nova has something really great with their *Lost Worlds* series. But why don't they do some modern-day booklets? I'd like to play the "Hood with Bicycle Chain" against the "Redneck with Broken Beer Bottle." Waiting in the wings would be the "Little Old Lady with Umbrella," the "Drunk with Halitosis" (need some special abilities there), the "Berserk Executive with Briefcase and Folding Chair," and even the dreaded "Little Kid with Peashooter."

Hero Games was dropping hints the other day about a combined game of ***Justice Inc.*** and ***TOON***. I don't know how that would work, but it sounds silly enough for me.

SJ Games isn't exempt from all this. We should get up our nerve to combine ***Car Wars*** and ***TOON***. Call it ***CarTOON***. Lots of funny animals driving around shooting each other and running each other down.

West End has ***Paranoia***, which is already about as silly as you can get. More supplements!

Flying Buffalo could be having more fun with their ***T&T*** solos. I heard a great story once about an adventure the staff ran over there — "Preppies in the Mayan Tombs," or something of the sort — Biff and Buffy slaying monsters with hard-driven racquetballs, and all that. Sure would beat "Deep Hole Full of Generic Monsters, Part VI." Go to it, guys.

And I saw something great the other day. It was a *little tiny* book, about 32 pages, called ***Dinky Dungeons***. Roleplaying carried to its lowest common denominator . . . they *really did* have a (sort of) complete RPG in that little bag, complete with tiny character sheets, tiny adventure, tiny gamemaster screen, tiny map, tiny errata slip, and two *teeny*-tiny dice. And it all fits in a 3" x 5" bag! Now *that's* silly. For a buck, how can you go wrong?

Have We Heard From You?

Every so often we like to remind you that a magazine — especially this one — depends on its readers — especially *you* — for articles, reviews, variants, and strategy tips. Like what you've been reading here? Then send us more of the same things you've enjoyed. *Don't* like what we've been running? You must *immediately* rectify this disastrous situation. Send us the articles *you* would have liked to see.

For more information about what we're looking for, see the Writer's Guide on page 46.

—The Editors

New and Upcoming

Late last year, we carefully worked out a schedule. A couple of weeks ago, foaming at the mouth, we changed it . . . to include a couple of new projects that we were suddenly hot to do.

The first one you'll see is ***TOON Strikes Again***, the first ***TOON*** supplement. Propelled by a half-dozen great reviews (all the major game magazines reviewed it, and they all loved it), ***TOON*** sales have gone through the ceiling. Not being idiots, we decided it was supplement time. So ***TOON*** developer Warren Spector vanished for a few weeks, to return with a silly manuscript . . . after which the office resounded with questions like "What do you do after the shark eats you?" and "Can you think of ten funny things to do on a desert planet?" Anyway, ***TOON Strikes Again*** is probably out *now* — it was in the queue ahead of this magazine. Look for it. If you don't buy it, at least take a good long look at the cover. You'll know why when you see it . . . maybe.

Not too far behind is the long-awaited ***Uncle Albert's 2035 Catalog***. This is a collection of the "Uncle Albert" gadgets from the first couple of years of *ADQ* — most now out of print — along with some new stuff. Look for Uncle Albert's honest face leering at you from the shelves around May.

Still on track for an Origins release is the ***Car Wars Deluxe Edition***; Scott Haring is meeting his deadlines just fine. (He'd better; he's using *my* office to work in, while I'm at home working on ***GURPS***.) We're looking at $16.95 for a set that includes everything from ***Car Wars***, ***Crash City***, and ***Truck Stop***, plus the copter rules from ***Autoduel Champions***, and more — all heavily edited, made more logical, compiled into a single rulebook, and *indexed* — plus all the original maps and counters, and improved, heavier road sections. We may release a few packets of these "Deluxe Road Sections" separately; they are printed on glossy cardboard, and look much better than the original versions.

GURPS Update

And then, of course, there is ***GURPS***. No "new news" — I'm still working away. But we have finished collating the 250+ responses from the ***GURPS*** feedback card. Ver-r-r-r-r-y interesting . . .

Price. About 78% of you would like a $19.95 (or higher) price tag . . . so we are currently shooting for $19.95. 41% of you would buy at $24.95, so that is our fallback position.

Subjects. We analyzed this two different ways to be sure, and they check out. To nobody's surprise, fantasy was the strong leader, followed by science fiction. After that, the surprises started.

Horror, after-the-holocaust, and ***Car Wars*** were all pretty much tied for third place. Superheroes and Illuminati/conspiracy were trailing behind, with espionage, Wild West, and WWII bringing up the rear. We were surprised at the weakness of superheroes, since that's one of the "in" subjects right now. Does their poor survey showing mean (a) *SG* readers don't care about superheroes, or (b) *SG* readers are all playing ***Champions***, or (c) superhero games are about to die, or (d) none of the above?

Another interesting point: We asked for separate ratings for Illuminati, horror, and espionage. But the "Illuminati" mythos definitely *includes* both espionage and Cthulhoid horror . . . and allows settings ranging from the 1700s to the modern era. And if you combine the votes for those three subjects, you get a strong third place. So we just might do that . . .

There were very few requests for subjects not mentioned; among those received, the most often mentioned were time-travel, black-powder/piracy era, "pulp" era crimefighting, and Japanese robots.

3-hole punch. The vote was YES, by a 2-to-1 margin. If the budget allows, we'll try to oblige.

Support publications. Most preferred were full-scale supplements, game-world backgrounds, and refereed adventures — but the programmed adventures were not far behind. Looks as though almost anything goes. □

FINIEOUS FINGERS IN DEEP SPACE PIRATES PART II

BY J. D. WEBSTER

The scene: CHAOS INSIDE A BLASTED SCOUT.

OKAY! SO THE HOBBITSKY'S A STRIKE CRUISER! ANY IDEAS BEFORE WE PANIC!!

TO PANIC-FULL

WHAT! NO WAY, I'M A WANTED MAN ON 24 SYSTEMS!

... OH REALLY,... 24 SYSTEMS?

YES, SURRENDER!

ALLRIGHT, SO I GOT A PARKING TICKET ON "DUNE" ONCE...

A PARKING TICKET ON DUNE?

YES, I WAS DOUBLE PARKED EVEN... BUT THAT'S NOT IMPORTANT RIGHT NOW, FRED! THE DAMAGE CONTROL CHECK LIST!

READY, FIN!

1. CONTROLS!

LOOSE!

2. GRAV-SYSTEM!

DRIFTY!

3. LASERS!

SHOT!

4. DRIVES?

WARPED!

SAY, ISN'T THIS CHECKLIST A LITTLE CORNY?

LOOK, I DIDN'T WRITE THIS SCRIPT..

RIGHT, SORRY...

OH! YOUR BEATLE'S WIG IS MISSING...

WIG! WHAT! THAT'S A GENUINE SPOCK TOUPEE!!

TA-CLUNK!!

WHAT'S THAT?

IT MUST BE A...

THE CONTROLS DON'T RESPOND!

TRACTOR BEAM?

GADS! THEY'VE GOT US...

THEY'RE BLOWING THE HATCH!

FIZZLE!!

POW

GO AHEAD PUNKS, MAKE MY DAY!

RATS!, I FORGOT THESE GUYS ARE SHORT! HEY! AREN'T YOU?...

YES, DWARF VADER!

NO, I WAS THINKING BILBO...

BILBO?..

©85 J.D.WEBSTER

MR. FINGERS, YOUR SPACE PIRATE DAYS ARE OVER!... HUH?

LORD VADER! LOOK!

A TRIBBLE!! (GASP!) RUN AWAY!!

SAVED BY A TOUPEE?... HOW HUMILIATING!...

JUST OUR LUCK, THESE GUYS WATCH STAR TREK RE-RUNS.

FIN, SHUT UP AND HELP ME FIND MY OTHER RUBBER EAR...

JDW

THE END... (MAYBE)

Capsule Reviews

Space Gamer reviews boardgames, role-playing games, computer games, play aids, publications, and game supplements. We review play-by-mail games if a reviewer is enrolled. We will attempt to review any science fiction or fantasy game if the publisher supplies a copy. We do not guarantee reviews of historical games. *Space Gamer* may publish a review of a game we are not sent — *if* a reader submits a review.

The staff will make reasonable efforts to check reviews for factual accuracy, but opinions expressed by reviewers are not necessarily those of the magazine.

Games and game items for which we are seeking reviews include ***Battlebikes, Crasimoff's World*** (PBM), ***Flashing Blades, The Last Starfighter Combat Game, The Last Starfighter: Duel in Space, Margin of Profit, Moria, Offworld*** (PBM), ***The Outcasts, Rangers of the North, RHAND, The Romulans, Sologames, Starbattles, Star Fleet Battles Supplement #2,*** and ***Star Trek III Starship Combat Game.***

GAMES

THE ARCANUM (Bard Games); $12. Designed by Stephan Michael Sechi and Vernie Taylor. 8½" x 11" 158-page book. For gamemaster and several players; playing time indefinite. Published 1985.

The Arcanum is the first book in Bard Games' ambitious Atlantis Trilogy, and if the following two are as well conceived and executed, the Trilogy should prove a significant contribution to FRPG lore. The Trilogy is designed to be used either as a full-blown RPG set in antediluvian Atlantis (the Second Age, following a greater First Age), or as a supplement to existing FRPGs, allowing them to be played in an Atlantean setting. As the first in the series, ***The Arcanum*** does a pretty good job at the first goal, and isn't bad at all in fulfilling the second either (though subsequent volumes will probably prove more useful than this one for those who wish simply to use Atlantis as the background for their current FRPG). It describes how to create an Atlantean character, dividing 100 + 2D6 points between eight characteristics and offering eight different player-character races and some 27 professions, from Alchemists and Assassins to Warriors and Wizards, plus additional background material to further define an adventurer. A wide variety of skills and spells is available, depending on profession and background. Game mechanics and combat are covered briefly, but adequately for the relatively simple, playable system presented — tasks are accomplished mainly by 1D20 saving rolls on characteristics, modified by profession, race, etc., or by percentile rolls for various skills, etc.

The Arcanum's usefulness as a supplement lies mainly in its extensive sections on magic and alchemy; more than a third of its total pages are devoted to these. The alchemy section in particular is, if not the best coverage of the mystic art ever presented, pretty close to it. Players of FRPGs that skimp over this area could find much of use here. Other miscellaneous rules, such as those on intoxication, are nice touches, as is the character's fame score, which determines how well known you may be throughout the antediluvian world. The map, taken mostly from the theories of Spence and others, is a welcome addition for Atlanteophiles, if a bit hard to read (a complete atlas will be presented in the second volume of the trilogy).

The only real fault I can find with ***The Arcanum*** is its mixing of traditional FRPG elements, such as dwarves and elves, into an Atlantean setting, which certainly isn't justified according to any books *I've* read on the subject (of course, the authors do note they are, in effect, creating their *own* theory of Atlantis here). Also, I find the inclusions of Druids as a profession in the antediluvian age somewhat incongruous, since they were an historic priesthood, *not* simply a type of generic woods sorceror, as too many FRPGs have misportrayed them.

Overall, ***The Arcanum*** seems quite adequate as volume one of a new FRPG, and could prove valuable as a supplement for other FRPGs, especially those deficient in alchemical information. I look forward to the remaining volumes in the trilogy.

—William A. Barton

THE PALLADIUM ROLE-PLAYING GAME (Palladium Books); $19.95. Designed by Kevin Siembieda. One 8½" x 11" 272-page softbound rulebook. For two or more players; playing time varies. Published 1983.

The Palladium Role-Playing Game is a fantasy roleplaying system that allows players to adventure in the colorful and detailed Palladium world. Characters can be any one of 13 different racial types and choose from over 25 different character occupations. The racial type governs the number of six-sided dice rolled by the player for each of the eight attributes (anywhere from two to five dice), with bonuses awarded for exceptionally high rolls. The occupation selected for the character determines the skills and limitations derived from the class. As a character gains experience levels, the expertise of certain skills also increases (an interesting mixture of level and percentage-based experience). Combats are relatively simple to handle, with very few modifiers applied to the 1D20 roll to hit.

The strength of ***The Palladium Role-Playing Game*** rests mainly on the plethora of material included in its pages. While the game system as a whole gives the impression that ***Palladium*** is just another roleplaying game, it is chock full of *adaptable* information. The number of magical spells, glyphs, and wards alone is staggering (at well over 350). The deity and religious sections are informative and interesting, complementing the Palladium world, its history, and inhabitants (something that cannot be said for a number of RPGs which attempt to add on religions as an afterthought or ignore them altogether . . . both producing less-than-satisfactory results). A GM cannot help finding something that would benefit the local campaign. This is not to say that ***Palladium*** is not a good game system in its own right, but to serve as a reminder that there is more than one reason to pick up "another roleplaying game . . .".

The weakest link in ***The Palladium Role-Playing Game*** has got to be in its combat system. Keeping in mind that a combat system is simply a means to achieve a desired end, ***Palladium*** provides only a modified version of ***D&D*** combat, where its other rule sections prove to be a cut above its obvious progenitor. It does get away from the idea that hit points represent a character's evasive actions, stamina, and "trick maneuvers" as well as physical damage limits by dividing the two into Structural Damage Capacity (SDC) and Hit Points, respectively. It even provides an elegant yet simple system for resolving an attack, which basically requires the attacker to roll higher than the Armor Rating of the defender on 1D20. So far, so good. Where the system breaks down is in the application of damage. SDC, as it turns out, is really nothing more than a pool of hit points which do not cause serious injury to the character. Normal hit points are *never* affected until the SDC pool is reduced to zero. In effect, one must completely destroy (read: hack off) an opponent's armor and use up his trick maneuvers before physical damage is taken. Combats are drawn-out affairs where everyone has (un)godly numbers of hit points to expend before getting to the niceties of some good old-fashioned bloodletting. Personally, I have a lot of problems with ***Palladium***'s combat system — though I enjoyed almost everything else in the book, right down to the nasty little "dungeon expedition" into the Gersidi family tombs. While it might not be the latest in earth-shattering designs, it was a lot of fun to read and play.

The Palladium Role-Playing Game is a game that aspired to greatness but fell just a little short of the mark. With the advent of ***RuneQuest, The Fantasy Trip***, and ***Lands of Adventure, Palladium*** is just a little out of step. GMs who are looking to add spice to their ***D&D*** games, or who really don't demand a great deal of realism from game mechanics, should by all means pick up ***Palladium***. But if you're searching for the ultimate in "realism" and innovative design . . . keep looking.

—Jerry Epperson

SUPPLEMENTS

THE QUEEN'S PARK AFFAIR (Sleuth Publications); $12. Written by Gary Grady and Suzanne Goldberg. Supplement to ***Sherlock Holmes, Consulting Detective***. 8½" x 11" 80-page Clue Book, 17" x 22" map of Queen's Park, time pad, newspaper archives, envelope with clues, contest sheet and entry form, boxed. For one or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

I've been a ***Sherlock Holmes, Consulting Detective*** fan since before I knew a thing about adventure gaming. I was originally attracted by the beautiful game components, the clear rules, the flavor of the game which is so meticulously maintained throughout. Like ***SHCD, Queen's Park Affair*** is a large-scale programmed adventure in which you visit people and places in Victorian London which may (or may not) be helpful in solving the mystery you are presented with. As a Baker Street Irregular, you are sent to investigate the disappearance of Franklin Kearney, a sports reporter. On

day one of the four-day adventure you are presented with an envelope containing the contents of Kearney's desk, and the game's afoot. The trail leads you to an attempted murder, a prison break, land fraud, and an entanglement with the local temperance league.

The game components, while not as wonderful as the two previous releases (*SHCD* and *The Mansion Murders*) are by and large very good; in particular, the envelope with the contents of Kearney's desk is a marvelous atmospheric device. The weakest component is the time record sheet, which doesn't provide enough room to write information. The other special feature in *QPA* is the clever use of time. Depending on the time of day you visit a site, you may get different clues. *QPA* is chock full of the nice flavorful touches that made *SHCD* and *Mansion Murders* so enjoyable: handwritten messages, calling cards, the period illustrations — all make you feel as though you really *are* in Victorian London.

Queen's Park Affair is different from previous *SHCD* adventures — no solution to the crime is given! Rather, this supplement has been sold as a competition — the person who solves the crime "in the manner most like Holmes" wins $5,000. Pretty nifty as a promotional gimmick, but it left me feeling that this was a bit of a ripoff. To submit your solution you have to send in a buck; to find out who wins the contest and/or get the solution, you have to send in another buck. I can just see all those little bucks multiplying in a money market account somewhere.

However, the good points of *QPA* outweigh this. There is repeat playability to the supplement (for this information I have to thank Lynda Manning, our resident *SHCD* expert). If you are willing to wait until June (and send in a dollar) for the answer to *QPA*, you will not have spent your money in vain — heck, you may still be playing the thing! As a last aside: To Mom, who whipped through *SHCD* and *Mansion Murders* in one weekend without even breathing hard — guess what you're getting for Mother's Day (heh, heh).

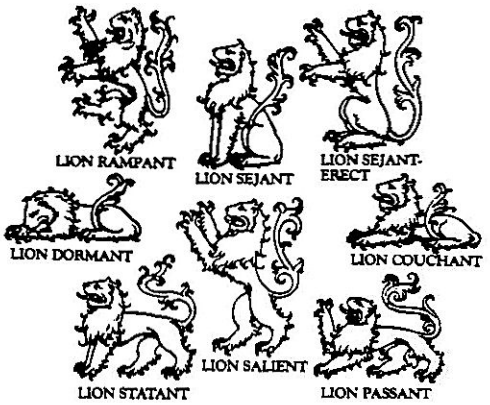
—Caroline Chase

ENCYCLOPEDIA HARNICA 3-11 (Columbia Games); $6 each, or $32 for 6-issue subscription. Written by N. Robin Crossby, Tom Dalgliesh, Edwin King, and others; illustrated by Ron Gibson and others. Supplements to *Harn* and *Cities of Harn*. 16-page 8½" x 11" booklets with color covers and 4-page color inserts. Published monthly since 1984.

This is the kind of product that makes an editor's life hard. Columbia Games publishes monthly supplements to its massive *Harn* game-world and *Cities of Harn* module; the installments cover cities, geographical regions (the "Atlas Harnica" section), history, politics, nonhuman races, castles, ruins, and cultural topics like heraldry, astrology, and herblore. Two "encyclopedia entries" per issue, each 4-9 pages long, are supplemented by Atlas Harnica charts and attractive maps.

What makes it hard to review *Encyclopedia Harnica* is its periodical nature and the awesome depth of the material. The detail is copious, the range impressive — not to say forbidding. As I am not conversant with Harn, all I can do is wimp out and say "If you're interested in this world, you should investigate these supplements" — a self-evident remark.

I will say that these are pretty skimpy products for the price — and that Columbia continues to excel at shameless space-filling, reproducing any given full-page map at least three times. (In Volume I, the Azadmere map is given *six* times!) And the text is still printed in brown ink on beige paper for maximum eyestrain. (Coming soon: *Harn* eyedrops and optometry charts!)



Anyway, this has been a non-review of *Encyclopedia Harnica*. If any *Space Gamer* reader would like to actually *review* them, please let us know. Now we have to figure out how to deal with the last dozen *Lost Worlds* books.

—Allen Varney

ACE OF CLUBS (TSR); $6. Designed by Merle Rasmussen. Adventure for *Top Secret*. 8½" x 11" 32-page book, cardstock cover folder with color map of adventure area. Number of players and playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

The Ace of Clubs looks like a typical private resort in upstate New York, but of course it's much more: a training ground for spies. But instructors at the school are dying under mysterious circumstances, and it's up to the handpicked team of agents to find out what's going on. The players go in under the cover of students learning firearm training — and . . .

Ace of Clubs is flexible enough to accommodate just about all types of players, from those who like to infiltrate quietly and secretly to the ones who walk in like James Bond and see what happens in reaction — and even the guns-blazing mercenaries (though that can be a fatal approach in this adventure). And unlike a previous module, *Operation: Sprechenhaltestelle*, the NPCs in this module are more than just numbers; they're individuals with names and (in most cases) personalities, and they have clearly defined (though secret) relationships to the other NPCs. There's one nice addition to the *Top Secret* arsenal here: the M-10 Ingram submachine gun, made famous by John Wayne in the movies.

There's a mysterious lack of information available to the agents about the club area, considering it's a spy school affiliated with the agency that sent in the team. In some ways it makes for a better and more fun adventure, but it doesn't make sense; surely the agents would be told about underground rooms, etc., that are important to the mission. The encounter chart still has those annoying encounters with mysterious footsteps that don't really add anything to the adventure and drive players up the wall. The module cover says it's for novice agents, but inexperienced agents have a tendency to shoot first and ask questions later — and shoot-em-up agents may not like the amount of firepower available to the opposition.

Ace of Clubs is another good *Top Secret* adventure — not great, mind you, but good. Its faults are relatively minor, and it's reusable — which is a major plus, and thankfully getting to be the rule in gaming adventures nowadays. However, despite the novice disclaimer, I recommend players have a couple of missions under their belts before embarking on this one.

—Kevin Allen

CATAPULT RUN (Fantasy Factory); $6. Written by Joe Thwaites, Chris Abbott, and Ian Hartshorn. Adventure module (unlicensed) for *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*. 32-page 8½" x 11" booklet with 11" x 17" color cover folder. For DM and four to six players; playing time two to six hours. Published November 1984.

Unlicensed supplements seem to be proliferating like rats. This new Canadian company's first adventure, *Catapult Run*, sends a party of *AD&D* characters (levels 4-7) on a moderately dangerous month-long race across 500 miles of wilderness. If you beat the four parties of NPC competitors, you'll receive an unspecified reward from the powerful wizard Rolth Tazor. Eighteen encounters may enliven your journey, along with five tables of random encounters, a lot of sparsely-described villages, and a band of assassins likely to pay you close attention. The appendix includes optional overland movement rules, a new spell (Momentum), daily "weather reports" for the race, and pregenerated player-characters. The cover folder is a map of part of the "World of Cypher," which will apparently be further developed in upcoming Fantasy Factory releases.

The text of *Catapult Run* is clear and professional, though the art is bad or dull, or both. The encounters (with pirates, hill giants, a fairground, gypsies, the guru Elerian, tritons, Dan the Druid, etc.) are complete and sometimes imaginative — I liked the swamp-nomads who live on the shells of huge, island-sized turtles. The rules for drowning and overland travel are intelligent. The cover is an offbeat, intentionally abstract line drawing in fluorescent colors on a black background — very inventive!

While I can't fault *Catapult Run* (much) for what it provides, I think most adventurers would want a more coherent approach. The race is a flimsy device for stringing together a batch of completely unrelated encounters; indeed, since all the competitors take different routes and there is no obvious

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prize awaiting the victors, it's easy to lose track of the race altogether. (The prize itself is no great shakes anyway.) The encounters, however complete, are usually so bland that the DM must call upon great creative reserves to spice them up. Also, encounter N is missing from the map key — unless that's it at the top of the compass rose, in which case those bandits are *far* away from any potential victims!

Catapult Run is a respectable product, but it lacks imagination, replay value — the race is run once every seven years — and a useful story line. Whether it might have been improved had TSR authorized and supervised its production is problematic. Anyway, it's okay for a first effort.

—Allen Varney

THE CLEOPATRA GAMBIT (Pacesetter Ltd.); $6. Designed by Ethan Sharp and Garry Spiegle. Module for ***Timemaster***. 32-page 8½" x 11" booklet. For three or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

The shape-shifting Demoreans have infiltrated ancient Egypt. Do they plan to kill Cleopatra, or is there more to this incursion? To find out, the Time Corps have dispatched a patrol; whatever the Demoreans have done, the patrol must stop them and set things right. This adventure presents rules on gladiatorial combat, chariot races a la ***Ben Hur***, and ramship combat, all of which the gamemaster could use if he sets many of his adventures in this era. All work well in the system and don't slow the game too much, although the arena maps lack any of the markings referred to in the text on chariot racing (and I would have preferred the grain of the arena map to allow the long straightaways to be straight, not zigzag).

This adventure lacks subtlety, logical coherence, and flexibility. The players' briefing at the beginning fairly screams out that there's more here than meets the eye; even if the players manage to overlook this, the fact that the Demoreans are acting openly seems like misdirection of the "Hey-look-over-here!" variety. And if all else fails, there is a clue so obvious it even comes with its own map and timetable.

I fail to see why the first two sections are in the adventure at all; even if the players are stupid enough to overlook all the evidence pointing to the rest of the adventure and head straight home, things are obviously still wrong when they get back, so more agents will be dispatched. This seems to make the idea of a feint absurd. I have a feeling that the ramship section was included just to introduce those rules and use the skirmish rules from the game, designed to allow roleplaying in the midst of (in this case, small) battles. This section has no "Significance" rating at all.

When the players get to where they're heading, they face the lack of flexibility I mentioned. If the players do one thing, they get arrested and sent to the arena; if they do something else, they get arrested and sent to the arena; if, on the other hand, they try something *unexpected*, they get arrested and . . .

With work, the GM can make a decent session of play from this module, but if he or she doesn't have the time or inclination to do so, it certainly isn't worth it.

—Russell Grant Collins

CAPTIF D'YVOIRE (Blade); $5.95. Designed by Steven Estvanik. Solo adventure for ***Tunnels & Trolls***. 36-page 8½" x 11" book. Playing time 15 minutes to one hour. Published May 1984.

Taking a break from the continent of Rhalph, Blade sets this adventure in France. Your character attempted to assist the rightful Duc d'Yvoire, Gastar d'Alcene, but was caught and imprisoned in the dungeon of the Chateau d'Yvoire. Your mission is to escape and continue to the camp of the rightful duke.

This adventure is definitely different from the standard fare from Blade. Although they have done escapes without your old favorite weapons (***Naked Doom***), and city adventures (***City of Terrors***), this scenario works well by combining the two. Your appearance in the town affects the manner in which the NPCs react to you. Losing all of your stuff before beginning the adventure does make it tough, but interesting.

As with any product, this one does have its problems. Many of the choices are by luck. Only one of many logical choices of spells will defeat the Ythul Elaith. New spells and NPC magic are meant to crock you when you make decisions the designer didn't want you to make. The new eighth level spell of "Rustler-Holding" prevents the character from taking one of the easy avenues out. Finally, most of the magic items have their disadvantages, and are limited in power. Mega-characters this adventure does not build.

This adventure is average for Blade. It is not as "Monty Haul" or disconnected as ***Weird World***, nor as rich as ***City of Terrors***. Still, if you would like a solo outside of Rhalph and have characters that are not that heavily dependent on their magical tools, this adventure is for you. Personally, I'm keeping "Jack the Clever," my mega-character, out of it. (Ask any FBI conventioner about him.)

—Philip L. Wing

PLAY-BY-MAIL

CAPITOL (Adventures by Mail); $2.50 — rules, $2.50/turn, $16.00 — rules, set up, 4 turns. Designed by Jack Everitt, Robert Cook, and Michael Popolizio. 20-page 8½" x 11" rulebook, graph paper, two plastic overlays. Computer-moderated, variable ending, play-by-mail game. 96 positions per game in 12 races of eight positions each; up to three turns per month, turns processed as they come in; one or two positions per player. Begun in 1983.

You and up to seven other players are pitted against eleven other teams in a race to conquer the galaxy; in this case the galaxy is a 98 by 98 grid. Each race starts out in two areas on the map, linked by a "stargate." Ships are designed by the owner and consist of weapons, shields, and cargo bays; they move from star to star and can carry probes to map new areas of the galaxy. Each world can produce raw materials, which are used by bases to make ships and establish or enlarge bases. Victory is based on eliminating other races (who will always be attacked by your ships) and capturing worlds.

A few special features make ***Capitol*** stand out from most empire-building PBM games. First, players are teamed together, and victory can go only to the team as a whole, not to an individual. Second, one of the players is designated the Capitol world player and controls the "Emperor" of the race. As capitol player, his choices at set-up time determine the cost of ships' components for the rest of the race. The Emperor can be moved around the map and has the power to grab worlds from other players, based on his experience. The capitol player is determined by who sends in the best "blurb" at the start of the game; however, he can be replaced if anyone else in the race builds a base bigger than his largest, giving you a new Emperor and capitol player. The mapping system is unique. Each time you fire off a probe, a map of the area around your ship is put on your printout. Using plastic overlays from the rules, you can transfer this map to graph paper given you in the setup. This graph-paper map is used with one of the overlays to code your movement orders for the turn sheet. At about six months into the game, the advanced rules start, allowing players to build stargates and bigger ships. A final interesting feature — if you encounter another player, you get his real name and address on your printout.

These unique features include both the strong and weak points of ***Capitol***. If the race you are in does not cooperate from the very start, you will quickly fall behind. If the capitol player of your race does not keep in close contact with the other players, you will probably be picked apart by your neighbors. However, if your race does work well together and has a strong leader as capitol player, you will be in for a tense and exciting slugfest. The mapping system, while allowing the automatic printing of maps on your turn results, is cumbersome and difficult to use. I would rather use Cartesian coordinates than the relative coordinates used on the overlays. Another feature I dislike is the rules, which are offset-printed copies of dot-matrix printer output. It is hard to read and unpleasant to look at — come on, guys, ever hear of typesetting from word-processer output?

I would recommend ***Capitol*** only for teams of players who ask to be set up together in the game. Note that a team can be from four to eight players, as each player can have two positions. If you end up, like I did, on a "pickup" team of players from different parts of the country who do not know each other, you are likely to be in for an uphill struggle. However, as a team game with your friends, ***Capitol*** can be challenging and exciting.

—Edmund Hack

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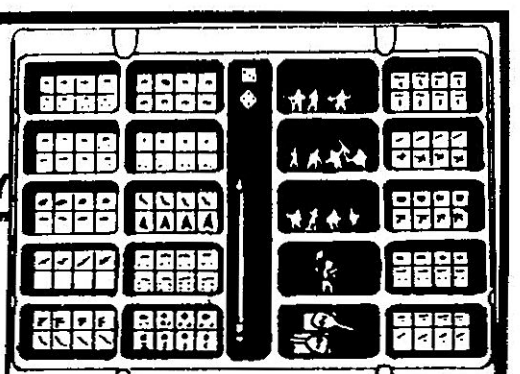

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PUBLICATIONS

PLAYING WITH FIRE (Moody Press); $4.95. By John Weldon and James Bjornstad. Trade paperback. 86 pages plus bibliography. Published 1984.

This book, by a religious publishing house (affiliated with the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago), is a tract that opposes roleplaying games! Weldon is the author of *Psychic Healing*, while the book's cover identifies Bjornstad as academic dean of Northeastern Bible College and "involved in cult research for eighteen years."

Strangely enough, this book has a few good points for RPGers. It demolishes the legend of James Dallas Egbert III of the University of Michigan. If you've heard the story of a college student who became so infatuated with ***D&D*** that he disappeared in the sewers, this is the case. Weldon and Bjornstad state — and this surprised me since I heard the legend — that no conclusive evidence was ever found linking ***D&D*** to Egbert's disappearance or later suicide. This will be valuable ammo for those defending RPGs. This book also performs a service for RPGers. If they note carefully the criticisms of RPGs they have heard, they will find, as I did, that most fit under the objections given by Weldon and Bjornstad. These are: (1) RPGs can lead to unhealthy involvement with the occult (the authors object to TSR's providing a bibliography of occult-related books in ***Deities and Demigods***); (2) the games may cause young people to spend too much time with RPGs to the detriment of other things, like schoolwork; and (3) immoral acts in the RPGs may encourage actual immoral acts later. The book also has thought-provoking moments, such as when it questions the violence found in some games (***Arduin Grimoire*** was cited, but a check of ***Fringeworthy*** and ***Rolemaster*** reveals bloody hit tables).

The book, as might be expected with its anti-RPG viewpoint, does have flaws. Many claims are weakly documented (example: "On a major network radio talk show a year ago, one prominent Dungeon Master admitted to one of the authors that he personally knew of several who had gone on to become involved in witchcraft and spiritism as a result of playing ***D&D***"). The book is almost open season on E. Gary Gygax. *Twenty-five times* the authors use quotes from Gygax's written works to show that the game, for example, can promote interest in the occult. But the authors do not mention that the ***D&D*** game, since being marketed for younger people, has toned down this element (check the decreasing significance given to deities compared to when the game first came out).

And it should be mentioned that Moody Press was somewhat dishonest. Despite the authors' absolving ***D&D*** of blame in the Egbert case, the back cover mentions ". . . the 1979 disappearance of a college student involved in a bizarre ***D&D*** plot."

Like it or not, RPGers, parents are reading this book or hearing from those who have. It has been prominently displayed in religious bookstores and in some regular bookstores. If gamers want to see the shape of a threat to their hobby, this book is it. Because of its informational value — plus a good bibliography of RPG newspaper and magazine articles — gamers may find it a worthwhile investment of their time and money, especially if RPGs are under attack in their home town.

—Steve LaPrade

PLAY AIDS

CAR WARS EXPANSION SET 6 (Steve Jackson Games); $3.95. Artists: Kim Strombo, Jeff George, David Welling, C. Mara Lee, Denis Loubet, Jeff Hayes, Dan Willems. Expansion set for ***Car Wars***. 153 counters, 8½" x 11" counter guide, in ziplock bag. Published 1984.

Car Wars Expansion Set 6 should please many ***Car Wars*** fans who bought ***The AADA Vehicle Guide***, for the expansion is very aptly titled ***The AADA Vehicle Guide Counters***. A counter for *every* vehicle in the Guide is in this expansion, representing the major sellers in the ***Car Wars*** universe. Included are vehicles ranging from cycles through cars of all sizes to a selection of semi and trailer counters, plus the bonus of helicopters and tricycles! Each counter illustrates the vehicle in question in black on a white matte surface, and is back-printed with the same vehicle, wrecked, on a slick surface. Why black on white? So you can color your own vehicles as you choose! Suggestions for the proper coloring media are included.

This expansion is much needed as a companion to the ***Vehicle Guide***, for you really can't take advantage of the wonderful designs in the ***Guide*** without counters for the cars. I suspect that this will be the major selling point of the expansion, although the opportunity to personalize your own vehicles is very nice. Whether you color the counters or not, they are first-rate quality. The material is strong, and the printing is crystal-clear. It's almost a shame to cut them apart.

Unfortunately, the counters will look drab among the multi-colored counters in the other ***Car Wars*** sets unless colored, and I defy anybody to do a coloring job equal to the printed counters that are colored at the printer's.

Car Wars fans: Get this expansion. Trust me, you need the new counters! This set doubles the number of helicopter counters, adds half again as many cars, gives you trikes for the first time, and adds another third to the number of cycles available in *all* of the counter sets SJ Games has put out. And this set is a must for anyone who owns ***The AADA Vehicle Guide.***

—Craig Sheeley

TRICORDER/STARSHIP SENSORS INTERACTIVE DISPLAY (FASA); $10. Designed by David R. Deitrick and Wm. John Wheeler. Play aid for ***Star Trek: The Role-Playing Game.*** 7" x 10" two-sided color cardstock "tricorder," four data wheels, five data strips, four brass fasteners, square of red film (for decoding overprinted data), 8½" x 11" 16-page instructions booklet, in cardstock folder. Published 1985.

Remember when Spock or Sulu would hold a little beeping box and tell Kirk, "Captain, tricorder readings indicate life forms blah-blah-blah"? Now FASA gives ***Star Trek*** roleplayers a little cardboard tricorder-sensor display. Printed wheels and strips of cardboard are moved to show "readings" through die-cut holes — "Klingon," "non-sentient," "It's dead, Jim," a whole lot of stuff. Each "descriptor" (to use Wheeler's detestable neologism) is given a code, which the GM can give the players so they can "take readings" and interpret the resulting data that shows through the little windows. The instructions discuss range, sensitivity, and "Proficiency Levels" of characters using tricorders or sensors.

This clever little gadget lends a lot of flavor to a campaign — not just ***Star Trek***, either, but any SFRPG where you can justify such "magic" pseudo-science.

But this thing doesn't *do* anything, you know; it doesn't calculate or store data or perform any function at all. It *does* slow down play enormously: Where you once told your players, "A Romulan cruiser is approaching fast," now you'll rattle off a string of code numbers and let the Science Officer cipher out "Starship — Romulan — cruiser — accelerating — closing," while the other players hunch expectantly over the display like old ladies at a ouija board. It could be fun . . . once or twice. Maybe three times.

A more useless contraption than this "tricorder" would be hard to imagine, but there are undoubtedly many ***Star Trek*** fans eager to buy it — so many, I'll wager, that there must be one born every minute.

—Allen Varney

MINIATURES

STAR FRONTIERS METAL MINIATURES: "Robots" and "Federation Ships" (TSR); $6 and $10.95, respectively. Boxed sets of lead-alloy miniatures. No sculptors credited. Released 1984.

These two sets seem typical of TSR's recent miniatures releases. After a really unimpressive start, the boys in Lake Geneva have gotten their act together to produce some (to say the least) decent-looking lead. More power to them.

The "Robots" set includes a half-dozen metal men — not giant Japanese-style monsters, but human-size "droids" in 25mm scale. All are similar, but no two are alike. The sculpting (and machining) is fairly clean, and the unnamed sculptor obviously had a sense of humor. Most of the robots have long, jointed arms that can be repositioned if you are *careful* about it. I like this set!

The "Federation Ships" package includes some miniatures rules for "Knight Hawks," as well as a *very* simple, but playable, stand-alone combat system. Then there are the ships themselves — six vessels of assorted size, with bases. The larger ships require simple assembly. The biggest is the diameter of a good cigar and about half the length, while the smallest can sit on a half-dollar without overlapping. Design, sculpting, and casting are all about average; this is almost a "generic" lead spaceship set.

Of the two sets, "Robots" is my favorite; more imaginative, better executed, and a better buy for the money. But check out the ships if you like miniatures battles. They aren't bad at all — just unspectacular and a bit expensive. The combat system might be a good way to introduce a new player to the miniatures genre.

—Steve Jackson

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★ ★ ★

Capsule Reviews

Most of the reviews we print are "capsule" reviews — 400 words or less. We want to run a review for *every* new SF or fantasy game or supplement.

Each capsule review should be five paragraphs long and contain:

(1) Basic information. Present these facts, in this order: NAME OF GAME (Publisher); price. Designer. (If applicable: "Supplement to ---," "Companion to ---," or similar note.) Format: list of components, with sizes of maps and rulebooks, number of counters, etc. Number of players; playing time. Publication date.

(2) General description of the game: background, the sides, course of play, special features, etc.

(3) Strong points. Discuss what is good about the game; in every game there *is* something worthwhile. "Fun" is a useless adjective. Be specific.

(4) Weak points. Every game has its problems, too. If the only faults you can find are minor ones, say so. If the game is fatally flawed, come right out and *say so*. If you can phrase your criticisms as suggestions for improvement, do so.

(5) Summation. Your overall opinion of the game. Who should and should not buy it, and why? Is the game worth its price?

All reviews must be signed; the reviewer's name *will* be printed. No game may be reviewed by its designer, by a playtester, or by an employee of the publisher. (Designer's articles are welcome, but must be billed as such!) Final note: If you can write a complete review in less than the full 400 words, by all means do so.

This review format is designed to encourage fairness and to give the reader enough information to let him or her decide whether he or she wants to buy that game. Keep that in mind when you write. This is a short review, *not* a complete analysis.

Featured Reviews

These are game reviews 1,000 to 2,000 words long. They should contain *all the above information*, plus whatever else the reviewer wants to say. They may be written in any format. A featured review may cover either a new game or one that has been on the market for some time. If *Space Gamer* has not already printed a capsule review, write one and submit it at the same time. We may even use both.

ARTIST'S GUIDE

PAYMENT: SG pays on publication. Payment for cover art starts at $60 and goes up, depending on quality of the work. Interior (b&w) art earns the artist a flat $1 per column inch — thus, a half-page illustration would pay $15. If your check would come to less than $5, we will round it up to $5, as for writers.

SUBJECTS: All art should be oriented toward fantasy, science fiction, and/or gaming. Either a serious or humorous approach is acceptable — whatever fits your style. Don't send us a barbarian hero with a clinging maiden at his feet; we have lots already.

Cover art — Can be full-color paintings or black-and-white illustrations suitable for two-color reproduction. Fine detail is a must. Artists must use a vertical format, leaving room for the *SG* logo and list of contents. Look at our past covers.

Interior art — At present we need only black-and-white material for interior illos. Line art reproduces much better than water-color or other material requiring screening. Work to exact size where possible: 1-, 2-, or 3-column width. *Note:* We use many more small pictures than we do large ones. If you keep your subject general, you increase the odds that it will fit an article or review. We will not run art unrelated to the material it accompanies.

Cartoons — Cartoons are bought at the normal b&w rate. If a cartoon is selected for the magazine's mailer cover, the artist receives a flat $10.00. Payment for continuing strips is subject to negotiation.

RIGHTS: SG purchases the original artwork and all rights unless initially specified and agreed otherwise. We will always return cover art if the artist specifies this at time of sale, but payment is adjusted downward accordingly. *SG* expressly authorizes artists to reprint their own work for purposes of self-promotion.

SPECIFICATIONS: Cover art may be executed in oils, acrylics, watercolor, pen-and-ink — whatever you like. Work on a light, flexible board if at all possible. Try not to send originals larger than 17" x 22". Actual size is quite acceptable.

Interior art must be executed in black ink (preferably India ink) on white paper. Again — work to actual size where possible. We prefer to paste up the original if we can; reproduction is better that way. *Do not* send originals larger than 8½" x 14". Art should always be mailed flat — never rolled.

RETURN OF UNUSED MATERIAL: We will return all art we reject, or any piece we do not print within a year — *if* the artist sends a stamped, self-addressed envelope with the original submission. If we do not receive an SASE, we will hold the rejected art for a month or so and then discard it.

SCANNER

News from the World of Gaming

TSR Sale Pending?

A Beverly Hills investment group has filed a letter of intent to "acquire a major position" in TSR, Inc., according to Dieter Sturm in TSR's public relations department. A second group has also expressed interest in "a major position" in TSR. Neither group has concluded its negotiations; Sturm said the situation may be resolved in late March or April. Sturm could not say what the negotiations would entail or what the "major position" would mean, but did not rule out an outright sale.

A letter of intent is not necessarily a firm offer, but Sturm characterized it as "very serious intentions pending definitive agreement." The letter involves certain dollar figures and conditions of sale, which Sturm did not describe. He did not identify the groups involved; unconfirmed rumors have mentioned officials of the Lorimar television production company (*Dallas*), or former Lorimar employees. But Sturm said, "I know for a fact that it is not Lorimar" which filed the letter of intent. Another unconfirmed rumor says film director Steven Spielberg is one of the interested parties.

TSR has laid off 36 employees from all areas of the company except the design departments. Sturm cited a "continuation of decline in sales volume" for the layoffs. Although information was sketchy at press time, reports are that two of TSR's top executives, Brian and Kevin Blume, have also left the company or have been bought out. The only confirmed fact is that Kevin Blume, the acting Chief Executive Officer at TSR, has "removed himself" from executive duties, which will be taken over by new CEO Richard Koenigs.

The decline in sales, said to be severe, has led TSR to change its marketing focus. "More attention will be paid to the hobby trade, as opposed to the mass market," Sturm said. "I think you'll see a lesser number of products 'cranked out' overall" from TSR, "but there will be ample supplies [of them] that have high quality standards — in materials and also in content. Mass market will still be important to the company; mass market provides opportunities to introduce people to roleplaying games — that, in turn, will create hobbyists."

In other TSR news, *60 Minutes*, the television news magazine, is preparing a feature story on the public outcry against *Dungeons & Dragons*. The story may air in April or May.

Sturm said sloping sales at TSR are possibly due to market saturation. But though sales of the basic *D&D* sets are off, modules and accessories continue strong. There are high expectations for the new *D&D Master Rules*, due this spring, and for two new hardcover *AD&D* volumes by Gary Gygax, due later in the year.

Convention Calendar

Austin, TX — WHO-TEX, April 26-28. Dr. Who convention. Contact Who-Tex, c/o Jim Zepeda, 841 Airport #49, Austin, TX 78702.

Denver, CO — ALTI-EGOS, April 26-28. SF con featuring Anne McCaffrey. Contact Alti-Egos, P.O. Box 261000, Lakewood, CO 80226.

Omaha, NE — CONTRETEMPTS 4, April 26-28. SF con with gaming, featuring Vonda N. McIntyre. Contact Contretempts 4, P.O. Box 45, Omaha, NE 68101.

Billings, MT — TREASURE CON III, April 26-28. SF con with some gaming, featuring George Takei and Phil Foglio. Contact Treasure Con III, P.O. Box 22111, Billings, MT 59104.

***Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada** — THE WIZARD'S CHALLENGE '85, April 26-28. Gaming convention in the Great White North, with Steve Jackson as special guest. Contact the Wizard's Challenge, 1137 Elliott St., Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada S7N OV4.

Spokane, WA — GAME FAIRE '85, April 26-28. Gaming con. Contact Game Faire '85, c/o Book & Game Company, West 621 Mallon, Spokane, WA 99201.

Milwaukee, WI — MILCON, April 27-28. Gaming con. Contact MilCon, c/o Louis Mengsol, 5616 W. Cairdel Ln., Mequon, WI 53092.

Pompano Beach, FL — GOLD CON III, April 27-28. Gaming con. Contact Gold Con III, Broward Community College, North 1000 Coconut Creek Blvd., Pompano Beach, FL 33063.

***Tulsa, OK** — CON-JURATION II, May 10-12, SF and gaming Con, featuring Mike Resnick and Scott Haring. Contact Con-Juration II, P.O. Box 690064, Tulsa, OK 74169.

Middleton, NY — MADNESS '85, May 11. SF, comics, gaming con — proceeds benefit local charity. Contact Madness '85, 34 South St., Middletown, NY 10940.

Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada — KEYCON 85, May 17-19. SF and gaming con. Contact Keycon 85, P.O. Box 1378, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3C 4E6.

Honolulu, HI — HAWAIICON, May 17-19. Gaming in sunny Hawaii. Vacation package offered. Contact Hawaiicon, Box 25445, Honolulu, HI 96825. CANCELLED

Bowling Green, OH — FALCON 85, May 24-26. Gaming con on Bowling Green campus. Contact FalCon 85, Conference Office, University Union, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH 43403.

Hamilton, Ontario, Canada — MIGS VI, May 26. Gaming con, featuring historical miniatures. Contact MIGS VI, c/o George M. Bawden, 11 Veevers Drive, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8K 5P6.

Astoria, IL — CAMPCON III, June 1. Gaming con. Contact CampCon III, Box 833, Astoria, IL 61501.

***Dallas, TX** — DALLASCON '85, June 1-2. Gaming con. Contact DallasCon 85, 3304 Crater Ln., Plano, TX 75023.

Danbury, CT — HATCON 3, June 7-9. SF, art, and gaming con. Contact HatCon 3, 108 Park Ave., Danbury, CT 06810.

Steve Jackson Games will attend those conventions marked with an asterisk.

Corrections

In *Space Gamer* 73 we incorrectly reported that the science fiction fandom computer bulletin board recently started in Austin, Texas, was sponsored by the Fandom Association of Central Texas (FACT). In fact, the board is an independent entity run by system operator Earl Cooley III, and is not associated with FACT. We regret the error. The phone number given is correct: (512) 836-SMOF.

In the description of Mayfair Games' 1985 schedule, the author of the *James Bond Q Manual* is Greg *Gorden*, not "Burden." Our apologies.

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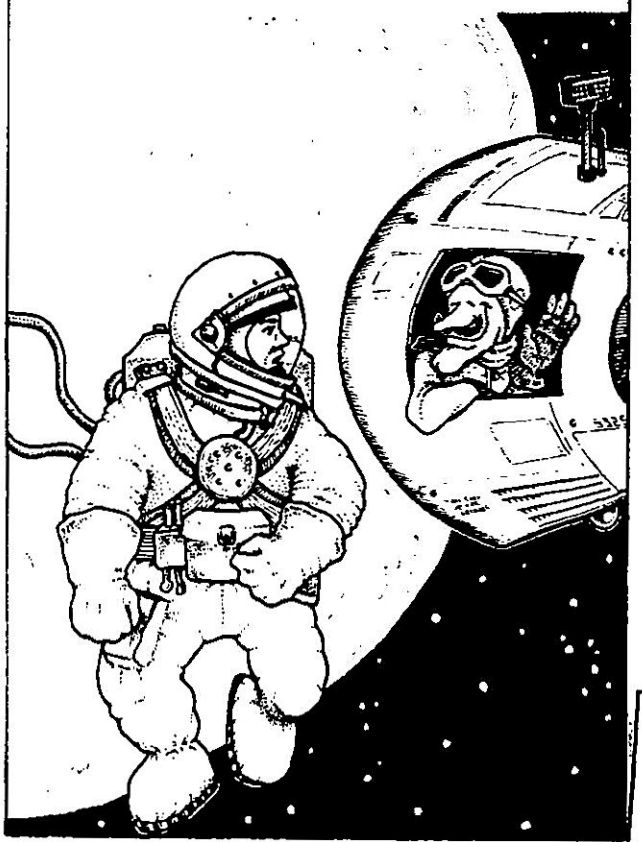
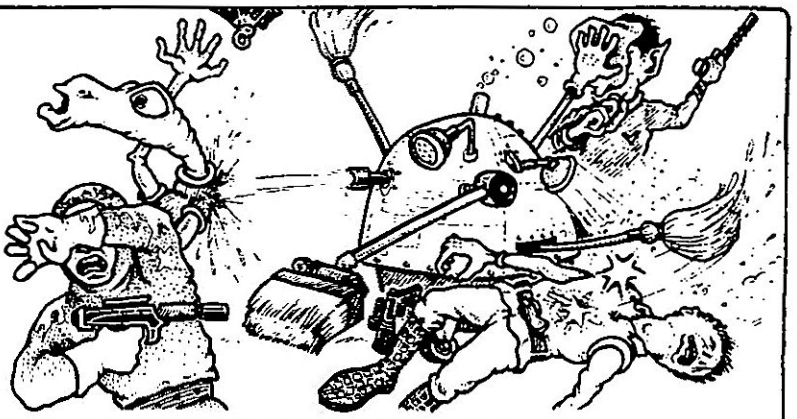
NO PROPELLER, OTHERWISE THE SAME--
In TIMEMASTER (Pacesetter), knowing how to fly a World War I biplane allows you to fly modern jets, helicopters, and futuristic spacecraft as well.

(-- Russell Grant Collins)





WATCH OUT FOR THOSE FLOOR POLISHERS --
In STAR FRONTIERS (TSR), a robot floor polisher has a 40% chance to hit with a weapon. (-- Mike DeWolfe)

THIS IS A JOB FOR GRANDMA MOSES!--
In MARVEL SUPER HEROES (TSR), a hero runs at a top speed of 1.2 mph.

(-- Steve Peterson)

MURPHY'S RULES

WHY DIDN'T WE THINK OF THIS IN 1942?
On the bases of three cardboard figures in its second INDIANA JONES module, TSR has trademarked the term "Nazi." (-- Bill Fawcett)

YOU CAN ALMOST SEE HIS FEET MOVE--
In UNDEAD (SJ Games), it takes at least an hour to go anywhere--even next door... (-- Creede Lambard)

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Four *new* adventures for *TOON*,
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PARANOIA

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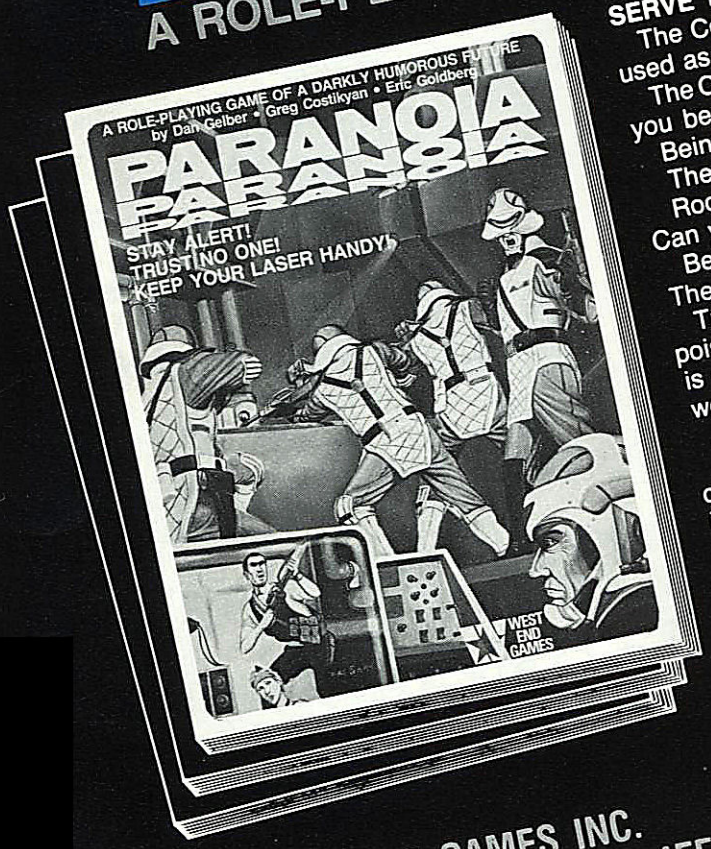
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SERVE THE COMPUTER. THE COMPUTER IS YOUR FRIEND!

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Troubleshooters get shot at, stabbed, incinerated, stapled, mangled, poisoned, blown to bits, and occasionally accidentally executed. This is so much fun that many Troubleshooters go crazy. You will be working with many Troubleshooters. All of them carry lasers.

Aren't you glad you have a laser? Won't this be fun?

There are many traitors in Alpha Complex. There are many happy citizens in Alpha Complex. Most of the happy citizens are crazy. It is hard to say which is more dangerous — traitors or happy citizens. Watch out for both of them.

The life of a Troubleshooter is full of surprises.

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Paranoia is an adventure role-playing game set in a darkly humorous future. A well-meaning but deranged computer desperately protects the citizens of an underground warren from all sorts of real and imagined traitors and enemies.

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